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Letter dated 22 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the following documents:

(a) A memorandum dated 22 January 2018 on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process (see annex I);

(b) A timeline of priority actions dated 16 January 2018, agreed to by the Malian parties and endorsed at the twenty-third meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee (see annex II);

(c) The communiqués of the twenty-second and twenty-third meetings of the Agreement Monitoring Committee (see annexes III and IV).

(*Signed*) Issa **Konfourou**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative

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Annex I to the letter dated 22 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Memorandum on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process, signed on 15 May and finalized on 20 June 2015 at Bamako

Situation in January 2018

I. Introduction

The implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process, signed at Bamako on 15 May and finalized on 20 June 2015, is continuing thanks to the combined efforts of the Malian parties (the Government, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform coalition of armed groups), with the support of the international mediation team.

While achievements or progress have been made in terms of implementing the Agreement, some difficulties or challenges remain, particularly owing to rising insecurity associated with the continuing terrorist threat and drug trafficking.

II. Achievements or progress made in implementing the Agreement

The following are the salient points in the implementation of the Agreement to date.

A. Political and institutional reforms

- The new regions of Taoudénit and Ménaka were operationalized: the governors were appointed and sworn in, and delegated project management agreements were signed for infrastructure repair, construction and outfitting of the general administration of the regions (Governorates, residences and lodgings, annex buildings, and so forth).

To that end, delegated project management agreements were signed on 13 May 2016 between the governors of Taoudénit and Ménaka and the respective managing directors of Agetier, in the amount of 1 billion CFA francs, and Agetipe, for approximately 800 million CFA francs.

- Interim authorities were put in place: Act No. 2016-013 of 10 May 2016 was promulgated, establishing interim authorities following the amendment to the Territorial Units Code; Decree No. 2016-0332/P-RM of 18 May 2016 was adopted; the Entente was signed on 19 June 2016, setting out the arrangements for the implementation of the interim authorities; and 10 decrees were adopted on 14 October 2016 relating to special advisers to the governors and to members of the interim authorities and transitional councils in the northern regions of Mali.

Interim authorities were put in place in Kidal on 28 February 2017, in Ménaka and Gao on 2 March 2017, and in the regions of Timbuktu and Taoudénit on 13 April 2017. Handover ceremonies between the outgoing heads of the regional councils and the heads of the interim authorities were held in Gao and Timbuktu.

In addition, once the interim authorities of Gao, Kidal and Ménaka were in place, training sessions were held for members from 7 to 10 April 2017. Training sessions for the interim authorities of Timbuktu and Taoudénit were held from 17 to 19 May 2017 at the training centre for territorial units.

The interim authorities of Timbuktu and Gao and the transitional councils of Taoudénit and Ménaka are adequately staffed and resourced, and therefore fully operational. As for Kidal, the first phase of the handover between the outgoing regional council and the interim authority took place on Thursday, 12 October 2017, and was followed by the first extraordinary meeting of the interim authority, at which two agenda items were taken up: (a) the operating and investment budget for 2017

and (b) the proposed budget for 2018. The second phase of the handover between the outgoing head of the regional council and the head of the interim authority eventually took place on Monday, 6 November 2017, under the supervision of the governor of the region and in the presence of elected officials, prominent local figures, representatives of the signatory movements (the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform), the head of the regional office of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the heads of local non-governmental organizations.

In addition, premises were found for the transitional councils of Taoudénit and Ménaka.

Lastly, all interim authorities (Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu) and both transitional councils (Taoudénit and Ménaka) developed and adopted priority action plans. The plans were approved by the relevant ministry and submitted to technical and financial partners involved in decentralization efforts on 21 September 2017.

- Key draft laws on decentralization, territorial administration and elections were reviewed, including the Free Administration of Territorial Units Act, the Territorial Units Code, the General Status of Officials of Territorial Units Act and the Special Status of the District of Bamako Act.

The draft laws were approved by the Government at a meeting of the Council of Ministers on Wednesday, 14 June 2017. They were then brought before the National Assembly and adopted on 14 September 2017. However, reservations have been expressed about the content of Act No. 2017-051 of 2 October 2017 (on the Territorial Units Code) and Act No. 2017-052 of 2 October 2017 (on the Free Administration of Territorial Units), which will be addressed during talks among the Malian parties.

- The Constitution of 25 February 1992 is under review: the constitutional review process was undertaken with a view to implementing the provisions of the Agreement regarding the establishment of a second parliamentary chamber, to be known as the Senate.

The new draft Constitution was approved by the Council of Ministers at an extraordinary meeting held on Friday, 10 March 2017, and was then brought before the National Assembly, which adopted it on 3 June 2017, with amendments. A constitutional referendum was due to take place on 9 July 2017, but was postponed. The President of the Republic subsequently decided, on 18 August 2017, to defer the constitutional review in order to achieve broad consensus on the issue.

- Partial commune elections and elections to the councils of the cercles and to the regional councils were scheduled to take place: the electoral college was initially convened for 17 December 2017, but the elections were postponed until April 2018 to allow for additional consultations with the relevant stakeholders. All these elections will be combined and by direct universal suffrage.

- In the light of the observations made by the signatory movements to the Agreement, talks were held among the Malian parties to discuss key legislation related to decentralization (Act No. 2017-051 of 2 October 2017 on the Territorial Units Code and Act No. 2017-052 of 2 October 2017 on the Free Administration of Territorial Units). The talks took place from 15 to 17 December 2017 at the training centre for territorial units and were organized by the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Taxation, with the support of the Office of the High Representative of the President of the Republic for the implementation of the peace agreement, the head of the international mediation team (Embassy of Algeria) and MINUSMA.

By the end of the talks, the Malian parties had reached consensus on all the items for discussion, with the exception of the concept of the chief executive of the regional administration and the order of precedence between State officials and the heads of the executive bodies of the territorial units.

B. Defence and security

- The National Council for Security Sector Reform and its specialized organs, the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, and the Integration Commission, were established on 31 December 2015.
- The heads of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and the Integration Commission were appointed at a meeting of the Council of Ministers held on 16 November 2016. The Commissioner for Security Sector Reform was already appointed in March 2016.

All three organizations (the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, the Integration Commission and the National Council for Security Sector Reform) are currently operational and have held their inaugural meetings in order to plan their activities. The regional offices of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and the Integration Commission have been established.

- The construction and remodelling of cantonment sites to house ex-combatants is still under way: of the 24 sites identified and approved by MINUSMA, 8 sites, each able to house 750 ex-combatants, are already functional. Following the attack on the Operational Coordination Mechanism camp in Gao on 18 January 2017, MINUSMA put in place security measures at the completed sites.
- Lists of ex-combatants from the signatory movements to the Agreement were submitted for the purposes of: constituting the first units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in the regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu; cantonment; and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

The first battalion of 600 men from the Operational Coordination Mechanism camp in Gao was constituted and joint patrols began in late February 2017. The number of men in the Gao battalion was increased to 750 to ensure the inclusion of all armed groups. However, the battalion is unable to carry out joint patrols beyond the city of Gao owing to a lack of heavy weapons.

Camp No. 1 in Kidal was vacated by the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad so that it could be refurbished by MINUSMA and used to house the Operational Coordination Mechanism's Kidal battalion. MINUSMA is currently carrying out the remodelling work, which is nearing completion.

- A round table was held with a view to approving the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme developed by the Government and the signatory movements to the Agreement, with support from the World Bank and MINUSMA. During the round table, held on 8 December 2016 in Bamako and attended by donors to discuss the financing of the reintegration component of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, partners expressed their commitment to supporting the process.

The total cost of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is $50 million, of which $25 million has been secured ($10 million from the Government and $15 million from the World Bank), leaving a shortfall of $25 million.

- A workshop, held on the operationalization of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission from 6 to 13 March 2017 in Fana. was attended by the signatory movements to the Agreement, MINUSMA and other partners.

- On 11 May 2017, an inauguration ceremony was held at the former headquarters of the African Regional Centre for Solar Energy to mark the start of the activities of the National Council for Security Sector Reform. A training workshop for members of the National Council for Security Sector Reform and its technical bodies was held from 19 to 23 June 2017, with the support of MINUSMA and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.

- The three organizations (the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, the Integration Commission and the National Council for Security Sector Reform) are currently working on defining and adopting criteria and quotas to ensure the commencement of the cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. MINUSMA is providing assistance by holding workshops. Accordingly, the Commission for Security Sector Reform held a strategic planning workshop from 5 to 7 September 2017, and a validation workshop on 10 and 11 October 2017. The workshops covered the following topics: (a) endorsing the operational plan of the Commission; (b) adopting the plan for the preparation of the national security sector reform strategy; (c) adopting the principle to hold a high-level meeting on security sector reform in Mali; and (d) analysing the draft criteria of the Integration Commission before their submission to the National Council for Security Sector Reform for approval.

- The first meeting of the National Council for Security Sector Reform was held on Friday, 27 October 2017, at the Office of the Prime Minister. The meeting was chaired by the Prime Minister, who is Head of the Government, and attended by all the statutory members, including representatives of the signatory movements to the Agreement (the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform). The head of the National Council for Security Sector Reform recalled the peace, security and development nexus and called on participants to give thought to developing a new national security and defence vision and establishing criteria, quotas and conditions for the integration of ex-combatants into duly constituted entities of the State, including within the defence and security forces. At the meeting, participants also adopted the draft national strategy on security sector reform and agreed to meet again two weeks later.

- On 2 November 2017 a workshop was held in Bamako to launch the programme for the reintegration of ex-combatants in Mali. The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Defence and Former Combatants, with support from the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, and was attended by representatives of the signatory movements to the Agreement and technical and financial partners, including the main donor, the World Bank (specifically, the International Development Association).

The total cost of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is estimated at $79 million. The programme is divided into two components: (a) disarmament and demobilization and (b) reintegration.

The cost of the disarmament and demobilization component is estimated at $29 million, of which $21 million has already been received through a trust fund managed by MINUSMA.

The programme for the reintegration of ex-combatants in Mali is part of the reintegration component, the estimated cost of which is $50 million. Some

$25 million has already been secured ($15 million from the International Development Association and $10 million from the Government of Mali); other donors will need to be approached to secure the remaining $25 million. The programme will run for 36 months and will focus on roughly 10,000 ex-combatants in two phases, with a regional approach.

- The Integration Commission held a workshop in Bamako on 6 November 2017 with a view to sharing experiences and views and developing a common vision on the reintegration of ex-combatants from the signatory movements to the Agreement into duly constituted entities of the State. The workshop was also intended to consolidate the achievements of the Integration Commission and the Commission for Security Sector Reform, harmonize the visions of the signatories to the Agreement, and set out the steps to be taken to ensure the successful completion of the integration process as a whole.

- An ad hoc committee comprising representatives of the Government and the signatory movements to the Agreement was established to discuss criteria and quotas for the reintegration of ex-combatants: following a meeting held on Tuesday, 14 November 2017 at the Ministry of Defence and Former Combatants, which was chaired by the Minister of Defence and Former Combatants, it was decided that an ad hoc committee should be established, chaired by the High Representative of the President of the Republic for the implementation of the peace agreement, in order to discuss in detail and reach consensus on the proposed criteria and quotas set out in the note prepared jointly by the Integration Commission and the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration.

The outcome of the discussions will be transmitted to the Ministry of Defence and Former Combatants and then submitted to the National Council for Security Sector Reform.

Explanatory and consensus-building sessions were held on Thursday, 16, Friday, 17 and Monday, 20 November 2017 at the former headquarters of the African Regional Centre for Solar Energy. The sessions were chaired by the High Representative of the President for the implementation of the peace agreement and attended by the heads of the Integration Commission and the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, the Commissioner for Security Sector Reform, and representatives of the Coordination and the Platform.

During the discussions, the representatives of the Government and the signatory movements to the Agreement considered the following issues:

- The terms of reference of the ad hoc committee
- The concept of "reconstituted armed forces", as mentioned in the Agreement
- The criteria for integration
- Quotas for the number of ex-combatants to be integrated and rehabilitated
- Special measures that the Government could consider taking in order to strengthen the process.

In conclusion, the Malian parties worked hard to resolve the question of criteria and quotas for reintegration, and welcomed the positive atmosphere that had prevailed during the three days of talks, which were chaired by the High Representative of the President for the implementation of the peace agreement. They noted that fruitful consensus had been achieved regarding the criteria for integration, despite the differing positions of the parties at the outset. However, with regard to quotas, further consensus-building efforts were needed, particularly on the question of how many

ex-combatants should be integrated into the security and defence forces and into the public services: the signatory movements to the Agreement felt that the figure should be 14,780, while the Government wanted 4,900.

C. Economic, social and cultural development

- During the interim period 2016–2017, an emergency relief plan was developed and implemented at a total cost of 265.554 billion CFA francs, of which 6.156 billion CFA francs will need to be sought from partners. The plan covers the sectors of education, health and hygiene, food security, hydraulics and energy, displaced persons and refugees. According to the most recent report, which was published on 30 October 2016, approximately 40 per cent of the plan has been implemented.

- A regional development agency was established in each region and planning agreements were signed between the Government and the regional authorities for the completion of structural projects and programmes in the territorial units, with the exception of Taoudénit and Ménaka, where regional development agencies have yet to be established. In the meantime, the regional development agency of Timbuktu is covering the region of Taoudénit, while the agency of Gao is covering Ménaka.

- The International Conference for the Economic Recovery and Development of Mali was held in Paris on 22 October 2015, with the support of the Government of France and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. On the basis of the initial figures released, it is estimated that contributions totalling 2,120 billion CFA francs (€3.2 billion) were pledged at the Conference for the period 2015–2017, including 397 billion CFA francs (€605 million) for the northern regions of Mali.

The commitments made at the International Conference for the Economic Recovery and Development of Mali will be followed up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, through a support unit set up to implement the Sahel strategy and the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, through the Aid Harmonization Secretariat.

- A round table was held on 24 and 25 March 2016 to review the infrastructure provisions set out in the Agreement (annex 3 of the Agreement). At the meeting, government representatives and donors, led by the African Development Bank, discussed the financing of infrastructure projects that would open up the northern regions of Mali, and selected 10 projects for implementation: 5 major road projects: (a) Sévaré-Douentza-Hombori-Gao; (b) Koro-Douentza-Timbuktu; (c) Gao-Bourem-Taoussa; (d) Bourem-Anéfis-Kidal-Algerian border; and (e) Ansongo-Ménaka-Andéranboukan-Nigerien border; and 5 major airport projects: (a) the refurbishment of Gao airport; (b) the construction of airport in Kidal; (c) the construction of the airport in Ménaka; (d) the construction of the airport in Taoudénit; and (e) the construction of the airport in Tessalit.

- A national validation workshop on the specific development strategy for the northern regions of Mali was held from 17 to 19 July 2017 in Bamako. National, regional and local stakeholders took part in the workshop, including representatives of State institutions, the Office of the High Representative of the President for the implementation of the peace agreement, ministries, national and regional technical government services, civil society and private sector organizations, territorial units, technical and financial partners and the signatory movements to the Agreement.

Draft legislation on the establishment and management of the sustainable development fund was adopted by the Council of Ministers on Wednesday, 2 August 2017. The next step is for the draft law establishing the fund to be submitted to the National Assembly.

- A concept note on the establishment of the Northern Development Zone was transmitted, through letters Nos. 00088 and 00089/PR-HR of 29 June 2017, to the signatory movements to the Agreement in order to gather their comments and views. They have yet to respond.
- The Ministry of Economy and Finance developed an action plan to transfer 30 per cent of State revenues to the territorial units by 2018. The plan is currently being implemented. In 2015, 11 per cent of revenues were transferred, rising to 24 per cent in 2016.

D. Reconciliation, justice and humanitarian questions

- An action plan for the management of internally displaced persons and refugees was drafted and implemented. The plan envisages, inter alia: developing refugee and internally displaced person sites; distributing basic necessity kits; and providing access to reintegration activities (such as income-generating activities). As at 30 September 2017, 61,089 refugees had been repatriated and had benefited from food-based support. It is estimated that 142,386 refugees remain in neighbouring countries.
- Three tripartite agreements were signed (among the Government, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and host countries) for the return of Malian refugees living in the Niger, Burkina Faso and Mauritania. Arrangements have been made with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for the organized repatriation of refugees, as soon as the conditions are in place. Meanwhile, statutory meetings are regularly held in order to monitor the refugee situation.
- The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission was further operationalized. Its membership has been increased from 15 to 25 commissioners in order to ensure greater inclusiveness of the relevant actors. The Commission is finalizing the establishment of its offices in the regional capitals (the reconnaissance and awareness-raising mission in Kidal to set up the regional office). The Commission is also continuing to implement its 2016–2018 Action Plan, including by listening to regional victims. To date, the Commission's regional offices have taken over 2,000 statements and documented over 100 victims in need of psychological and medical care. However, persistent insecurity in the northern regions of Mali is considerably slowing down the Commission's work.

In accordance with its mandate, the Commission has also carried out other activities, including two significant thematic studies for which reports have been available since May 2017. These studies are on (a): the root causes of the conflict affecting Mali from 1960 to present day; and (b) promotion of the democratic values of citizenship and diversity in Mali.

- The Conference for National Harmony: the President of the Republic entrusted the holding of the Conference to the Ombudsman of the Republic. Preparatory regional consultations were held from February to March 2017 in all regions and the Bamako district. The Conference for National Harmony itself was held from 27 March to 2 April 2017 in Bamako and addressed the following three main topics: (a) peace; (b) national unity; and (c) national reconciliation. The conclusions and recommendations emanating from the Conference will provide

building blocks for drafting a Charter for Peace, Unity and National Reconciliation, which will be the foundation for coexistence among Malians.

The Chair of the Conference for National Harmony was appointed Chair of the Special Commission in charge of drafting the Charter for Peace, Unity and National Reconciliation and the mapping of land in the Republic of Mali by means of Decree No. 2017-0370/P-RM dated 3 May 2017. This Commission has set up two working groups: the first is entrusted with drafting the Charter and the second with the mapping of land in Mali. Missions have been conducted, both inside and outside the country, to explain the contents of the draft Charter to our compatriots.

The document containing the charter and mapped territories of Mali was submitted to the President of the Republic on 20 June 2017, on the occasion of the second anniversary since the signature of the Agreement was finalized.

- Transitional justice measures have been implemented through the drafting of a national transitional justice policy document that was shared with the signatory movements to the Agreement prior to its adoption by the Government in November 2016.

- Decree No. 2017-2011/PM-RM dated 22 June 2017 established a good offices mission in the regions of Kidal, the Inner Niger Delta and the Niger Bend. The ultimate goal of the mission is to strengthen the presence of the State in Kidal, contribute to stabilizing the central regions and, above all, further consolidate coexistence in Mali. The mission, led by Imam Mahmoud Dicko, has been carrying out its work since June 2017. The visits conducted by the head of the good offices mission to Kidal and the Inner Niger Delta have achieved favourable results. Regional forums were also held in the regions of Ségou and Mopti, respectively in September and November 2017, on the contribution of religious and traditional leaders, among others, to the peace and reconciliation process.

- Ambassador Boubacar Gaoussou Diarra, a retired judge, was appointed focal point of the International Commission of Inquiry by letter No. 725/PM-CAB of 29 December 2017, further to an unnumbered letter dated 20 October 2017 from the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations.

The focal point's responsibilities include coordinating actions taken by the Malian authorities for the protection of victims and persons providing information to the International Commission of Inquiry. The focal point also ensures follow-up of this coordination with respect to the Commission, MINUSMA and the relevant departments of the United Nations.

III. Main challenges in the implementation of the Agreement

The main challenges in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali are as follows:

(a) Operationalization of the Operational Coordination Mechanism's battalions in Goa, Kidal and Timbuktu, and the deployment of joint patrols in all northern regions, in order to combat the prevailing insecurity that is slowing down a return to normality;

(b) The establishment and effective functioning of the interim authorities and transitional councils, the return of State administration in all northern regions and the re-establishment of basic social services to conflict affected populations;

(c) Mobilization of the pledges made at the International Conference for the Economic Recovery and Development of Mali, held in Paris on 22 October 2015, for the implementation of the commitments made by the Malian Government under the Agreement;

(d) Realization of, and respect for, the principle of inclusiveness among the signatory movements to the Agreement (the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform) in order to minimize contested decisions and measures in the future related to the implementation of various components of the Agreement;

(e) Increased outreach that enables the majority of Malians to take ownership of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. It is important that Malians forge a genuinely sacred union around the Agreement in order to accelerate its implementation and allow people to reap the dividends of peace;

(f) Maintenance of the international community's exceptional mobilization efforts on behalf of Mali in order to safeguard its unity, territorial integrity and the republican form and secular nature of the State;

(g) The establishment of a reliable and comprehensive information system and database in order archive and build the memory of the process of implementing the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

IV. Prospects

The following aspects are important in terms of the prospects for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali:

(a) The creation of an environment conducive to the implementation of the Agreement, including through the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel to support the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and insecurity;

(b) The expeditious deployment of the Operational Coordination Mechanism and joint patrols in the regions of Kidal and Timbuktu to accelerate the cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, taking into account the specific concerns of young people in the city of Gao and the central regions of the country;

(c) Actions to make the interim authorities in all northern regions effectively operational and to further strengthen basic social services for the benefit of communities;

(d) The continuation of efforts to restore the State in Kidal. In this regard, it is worth noting the arrival and residence, since 15 October 2017, of the Kidal member of parliament and mayor of the city, accompanied by two heads of the Imghad faction, without clashes or opposition;

(e) Consolidation of the truce signed on 23 August 2017 between the signatory movements to the Agreement (the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform) and extended by agreement of the parties on 6 September 2017. This truce resulted in the signing, on 20 September, of the document entitled "Commitments", which provides for an immediate, complete and lasting cessation of all forms of hostility between the two movements.

- The direct dialogue between the movements that took place from 5 to 10 October 2017 in Anéfis (Kidal Cercle, Kidal Region) also resulted in the movements beginning to implement the commitments of 20 September, in order to

definitively resolve the inter-communal conflicts that are seriously impeding implementation of the Agreement.

– Accordingly, it was decided to establish a High-level Commission composed of 12 members: 6 from the Coordination and 6 from the Platform. In addition, four working committees were established, namely: (a) the security committee, (b) the justice committee, (c) the political committee and (d) the reconciliation committee. The delegations of the signatory movements are due to meet in Bamako to finalize a consensual timeline with the Government.

– In accordance with the commitments made on 20 September 2017 by the signatory movements, 80 vehicles with armed members of the Platform (Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés and Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad) returned to the site at Takalott;

(f) Successful completion of the institutional reforms and conclusion of the revision of the Constitution, which transposes the provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali;

(g) Mobilization of the resources pledged and the expertise necessary to implement the commitments made by the Government under the Agreement;

(h) Ongoing implementation of all relevant recommendations of the second high-level meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, held in Bamako on 10 February 2017. It should be noted that the Agreement Monitoring Committee is holding its statutory meetings on a regular basis;

(i) Implementation of the new mandate of MINUSMA pursuant to Security Council resolution 2364 (2017) adopted on 29 June 2017;

(j) Enforcement of the general regime of targeted sanctions adopted on 5 September 2017 by the Security Council, through its resolution 2374 (2017), against those responsible for obstructing the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and implementation of the six points from the messages emanating from the Security Council mission to Mali (19–22 October 2017);

(k) Operationalization of the International Commission of Inquiry provided for in article 46 of the Agreement, mandated to investigate all crimes and other serious violations of international law and human rights, in accordance with the guidance provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations in his letter of 20 October 2017;

(l) Facilitation of the mission of the Carter Center, which has been appointed as an independent observer to objectively evaluate the status of the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process.

Annex II to the letter dated 22 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Timeline of priority actions agreed by the Malian parties and endorsed by the twenty-third meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee

16 January 2018

Thematic areas	*Goals*	*Measures*	*Time period*	*Responsible authority*
A. Political and institutional matters	(a) Bring the Territorial Units Code and the Free Administration Act into conformity with the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali	1. Finalize discussions among the parties regarding the distribution of authorities between State representatives and the president of the legislative body, and determine the statute of the head of the regional executive office.	22 January–15 February	– Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (focal point) – Ministry of Territorial Units – Signatory movements
		2. Harmonize the name of the regional legislative body and determine its functions.	22 January–15 February	– Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (focal point) – Ministry of Territorial Units – Signatory movements
		3. Expedite consultations among the various parties with a view to establishing, organizing and determining the operating modalities of the municipal or communal police, called "territorial police" in the Agreement.	22 January–15 February	– Ministry of Security and Civil Protection (focal point) – Ministry of Defence and Former Combatants – Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization – Ministry of Territorial Units; Signatory movements

Thematic areas	*Goals*	*Measures*	*Time period*	*Responsible authority*
	(b) Ensure the effective functioning of the interim authorities and transitional councils	1. Establish an operational framework for the interim authorities with priority short- and medium-term actions, including preparing for the elections (revising the voter register, installing polling stations and making them safe, and ensuring the gradual return of refugees).	22 January–15 February	– Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization – Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action – Signatory movements
		2. Provide the interim authorities and transitional councils with the human, technical and financial resources needed to fulfil their mandates.	16 January–20 March	– Ministry of Territorial Units (focal point) – Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization – Ministry of Economy and Finance – Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action – Signatory movements
	(c) Operationalize the territorial units of the newly created regions and cercles	1. Accelerate the process of establishing territorial units for the regions of Ménaka and Taoudénit and the cercles of Almoustarat and Achibogho.	20 January–28 February	– Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (focal point) – Ministry of Territorial Units – Ministry of Economy and Finance – Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action – Signatory movements
B. Defence and security matters	(a) Operationalize the Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism	1. Agree on mechanisms and technical aspects (staff, individual and group equipment, heavy weapons and logistics) for the	22 January–20 February	– Ministry of Defence and Former Combatants (focal point) – Technical Commission on Security

Thematic areas	*Goals*	*Measures*	*Time period*	*Responsible authority*
		operationalization of the Kidal and Timbuktu units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism, and determine a timeline for their gradual deployment.		– Signatory movements – United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).
		2. Strengthen the Gao units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism by providing them with heavy weaponry.	22 January–20 February	– Ministry of Defence and Ex-combatants (focal point) – Technical Commission on Security – Signatory movements; MINUSMA
		3. Decision adopted jointly by the signatory parties, indicating that all arms, including heavy weapons organic to the movements, remain the property of the movements until disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.	15–30 January	– Ministry of Defence and Former Combatants (focal point) – Signatory movements – Technical Commission on Security – MINUSMA
	(b) Determine the existing number of combatants of the signatory movements	1. Provide certified lists of the combatants.	22 January–20 March	– National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (focal point) – Commission on Integration – Signatory movements – MINUSMA – Technical Commission on Security
	(c) Finalize discussions on the criteria and quotas for integration and continue drafting the	1. Finalize discussions on the criteria and quotas.	22–26 January	– Ministry of Defence and Former Combatants (focal point)

Thematic areas	*Goals*	*Measures*	*Time period*	*Responsible authority*
	strategy for security sector reform (to be done by the Commission for Security Sector Reform)			– Ministry of Civil Service – Political leaders of the signatory movements; – Office of the High Representative
		2. Submit the consensus criteria and quotas for integration to the National Council for Security Sector Reform for approval.	29 January–2 February	Office of the Prime Minister/National Council for Security Sector Reform (focal point)
	(d) Create secure conditions for the upcoming elections	1. Develop and deploy a security system (reconstituted defence and security forces, MINUSMA and signatory movements) to provide security at polling stations.	From 22 January	– Ministry of Territorial Administration (focal point) – Ministry of Security and Civil Protection – Ministry of Defence and Former Combatants – MINUSMA – Signatory movements
		2. Have combatants of the signatory movements not selected for the Operational Coordination Mechanism participate in the security operations for the elections, in a manner to be decided among stakeholders.	From 22 January	– Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (focal point) – Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action – Ministry of Territorial Units – Ministry of Local Development – Ministry of Economy and Finance
C. Economic, social and cultural development	(a) Establish the Northern Development Zone	1. Convene a consultative meeting with representatives of the signatory movements, the Office of the High	22 January–15 February	– Ministry for the Management of Land and People (focal point)

Thematic areas	*Goals*	*Measures*	*Time period*	*Responsible authority*
		Representative and the interim authorities of the relevant regions to examine the documents, including the concept note already prepared, with a view to determining the arrangements for establishing and implementing the Development Zone.		
D. Follow-up and evaluation	(a) Strengthen the framework of consultations	Provide the Office of the High Representative with senior experts in various fields for implementation of the Agreement.	First quarter of 2018	– Office of the President; – Office of the Prime Minister – Ministry of Economy and Finance – Office of the High Representative – Signatory movements

NB:

- The Malian parties undertake to comply with the timeline adopted and to implement the proposed measures.
- The Malian parties agree that the Office of the High Representative of the President for the implementation of the peace agreement will ensure the follow-up of the implementation of all measures contained in this timeline with respect to the Agreement Monitoring Committee (leader of the mediation team) and MINUSMA.

Annex III to the letter dated 22 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Communiqué of the twenty-second meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee

Bamako, 5 December 2017

In accordance with the provisions of chapter 19, articles 57 to 62, of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process, and with its rules of procedure, the Agreement Monitoring Committee held its twenty-second session on 5 December 2017.

The Committee adopted its agenda, namely: presentations by the Government and the movements on the outcome of their work, including regarding political and institutional matters and issues related to security mechanisms, and reporting by the thematic subcommittees.

The Government informed the Committee of the initiatives undertaken between meetings to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement and noted that, following the postponement of the elections, the Malian parties had decided to establish a road map with a view to resolving their differences on the Territorial Units Code and the Free Administration Act. The Government also indicated that discussions on security sector reform would continue in order for agreement to be reached shortly with the movements, including on integration quotas.

The Committee welcomed the constructive working atmosphere among the Malian parties, which had led to a convergence of views on the issues under discussion. It urged them to convert that momentum into tangible acts in the implementation of the Agreement. The Committee took note of the Government's decision to convene a meeting of all interim authorities in the coming days, in the presence of the signatory movements, in order to define the priority actions of the former. The Committee also encouraged the Government to continue its efforts to ensure the effective functioning of the interim authorities and to accelerate the process of establishing territorial units in the regions of Ménaka and Taoudenni.

The Committee welcomed the inclusion initiatives undertaken by the signatory movements themselves, and also the readiness of the Government to work in the same direction towards a permanent resolution of this issue.

The Committee endorsed the report of the subcommittee for political and institutional matters, and the report of the subcommittee for defence and security. It particularly welcomed the decision of the Malian parties to hold an extraordinary meeting of the Technical Commission on Security in order to determine the arrangements for the immediate operationalization of the Kidal and Timbuktu joint units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism.

In the meantime, with a view to ensuring a more effective dialogue among the signatories to the Agreement, the Malian Government and the movements agreed to future participation by the independent observer, MINUSMA and the leader of the international mediation efforts (Algeria) in meetings of the inter-Malian discussion mechanism, as observers.

Lastly, the Committee regretted the absence of some of its members noted at the twenty-second meeting and urged all stakeholders to remain committed to the mechanism established by the Agreement. In that regard, the Committee decided to communicate the dates of its meetings well in advance so that all its members could make the necessary arrangements to participate fully in its work.

The next meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee will be announced at a later date.

Annex IV to the letter dated 22 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Communiqué of the twenty-third meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee

Bamako, 15–16 January 2018

In accordance with the provisions of chapter 19, articles 57 to 62, of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process, and with its rules of procedure, the Agreement Monitoring Committee held its twenty-third meeting in Bamako on 15 and 16 January 2018.

The Committee adopted its agenda, namely: presentations by the Government and the movements on the outcome of their work, including regarding political and institutional matters and issues related to security mechanisms; reporting by thematic subcommittees able to hold their statutory meetings; and formalization of the establishment of the independent observer.

The Government informed the Committee of the outcome of the workshop organized in December 2017 by the Malian parties with a view to harmonizing the Territorial Units Code and the Free Administration Act with the provisions of the Peace Agreement. The Committee took note of the outcome and encouraged the parties to continue their discussions in order to resolve outstanding issues, including the question of the chief executive of the region.

With regard to the security mechanisms, in particular operationalization of the units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Kidal and Timbuktu, the Committee welcomed the decision of the Malian parties to provide Mechanism units with the necessary equipment, including heavy weaponry, and urged the parties to operationalize that equipment as soon as possible. The Committee also welcomed the progress made on the issue of the criteria and integration quotas for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

The Committee welcomed and endorsed the timeline of priority actions agreed by the Malian parties following the inter-Malian discussions held in parallel to the twenty-third meeting.

This timeline is a road map for the implementation of the key provisions of the Agreement, which will support the stabilization of the country and the holding of the elections scheduled for April of next year. The Committee urged the Malian parties to abide by the commitments made and encouraged the international community to lend its support in this regard.

The Committee endorsed the reports of the subcommittees responsible for: (a) political and institutional matters, (b) defence and security and (c) economic, social and cultural development. It welcomed some achievements made in the various areas of implementation of the Agreement, as described in the reports of the above-mentioned subcommittees.

The Committee welcomed the independent observer and reiterated that it would support the implementation of its mandate.

The next meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee will take place on 12 and 13 February 2018.

Bamako, 16 January 2018

United Nations S/2018/59

Security Council

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Letter dated 22 January 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Somalia (see annex I), submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2372 (2017), in which the Council requested the African Union to report regularly on the implementation of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia, and the related communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (see annex II).

I should be grateful if you would bring the report to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

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Annex I

Report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the situation in Somalia

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 9 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2372 (2017) of 30 August 2017, wherein the African Union was requested to keep the Security Council regularly informed on the implementation of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

2. The report provides an update on the implementation of the AMISOM mandate and resolution 2372 (2017) for the period from September to November 2017. The report concludes with observations on the way forward.

II. Major developments

Main political developments

3. The political landscape in Somalia continues to be intertwined with recurring challenges and new developments on several critical issues. Without the resolution of those issues, the country will be unable to achieve progress in its governance and State-building efforts. The challenges and developments include the constitutional review process, the relationship between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states, the dialogue between Galmudug State and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a and preparations for the 2020 elections.

4. The spillover effect of the Gulf crisis tends to be at the centre of the aforementioned challenges. Prior to the restoration by the Federal Government of Somalia of budgetary support to the federal member states in October 2017, a number of the states had approached Gulf countries for assistance. At the time there was a lack of political agreement on resource-sharing and priorities in view of the great financial demands at both the federal and state levels. As a result, several of the federal member states aligned with Saudi Arabia and its allies against the neutral stance of the Federal Government of Somalia in the Gulf crisis. This has not only continued to fuel deep divisions and tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states, but has also raised difficult constitutional questions, just as Somalia was planning to launch its constitutional review process in 2017–2019. These divisions and tensions led to intra-state opposition that resulted in the unseating of the leaders of Galmudug and South-West states, owing to perceived interference by the Federal Government of Somalia.

5. One of the consequences of the deep divisions and tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states was the stalling of the plans to hold a national constitutional convention on 8–10 October 2017, at which the constitutional review process would have been officially launched. The federal member states, the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission and the Joint Parliamentary Constitutional Review Oversight Committee boycotted the process. The boycott derailed seven months of successful efforts that included wide consultations with the federal member states by the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs on the constitutional review process. The 16-point communiqué of the Kismaayo meeting points to the resolve of the federal member states to enhance regional cooperation and pursue a common position on issues relating to security, politics, federalism and reconciliation. In this regard, clarity is required on the interpretation of article 53 (1) of the provisional constitution, on the

basis of a common understanding and agreement between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states. This will enable the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to establish the modalities for consultations on specific matters that have a direct impact on the federal member states, in line with that article.

6. While the nine-day high-level consultative meeting held in Mogadishu in November 2017, which was chaired by the President of Somalia, did not resolve the deep division and challenges facing the relationship between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states, it facilitated the reaching of a consensus between the Federal Government of Somalia and the leaders of the federal member states on the establishment of an expert committee to look into issues of power- and resource-sharing over the coming six months. Six critical issues were agreed upon at the meeting, namely: improving security in the country and eliminating terrorism; promoting a federal system in the country; fast-tracking the review of the Constitution under a unified approach; preparing the 2020 electoral process; strengthening cooperation between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states; and promoting development projects and humanitarian aid. In addition, the integration of security forces under a unified national army, based on a proportional contribution from the federal member states, in line with the national security architecture, was also highlighted as critical.

7. The Federal Government of Somalia has made progress in the preparations for the 2020 elections by working on the design of the electoral system/process with key government institutions, including the National Independent Electoral Commission, the Boundaries and Federation Commission, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Office of the President, the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development. The African Union continues to support this process and the National Independent Electoral Commission at the technical and capacity-building levels. The African Union Commission also participated at the continental forum of electoral management bodies, which was held in Kigali in November 2017.

8. At the regional level, the new Government was expected to prioritize the consolidation of federal structures by establishing district and local councils. South-West and Jubbaland states enacted their local government laws ahead of the formation of district and local councils. Once implemented, the laws are expected to facilitate the smooth implementation of the AMISOM mandate and fulfil one of the key conditions for the AMISOM handover to the Somali National Security Forces. However, the political turbulence, as exemplified by the sudden ousting of the President of HirShabelle State, Ali Osoble, and the attempts to oust the leaders of Galmudug and South-West states, the persistent conflicts due to clan dynamics in some of those states and the elusive dialogue between Galmudug state and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a have together limited progress in the development of local governance laws and potentially undermined efforts aimed at consolidating the federal structures.

Key security developments

9. AMISOM continues to contribute towards the improvement of the security situation in Somalia. Despite the continued asymmetrical threat posed by Al-Shabaab, the security situation is gradually improving. The prime targets of Al-Shabaab attacks remain the Federal Government of Somalia, AMISOM and the forward operating bases of the national security forces throughout the sectors. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) remain Al-Shabaab's principal weapons of choice. Despite the increase in IED attacks, the AMISOM identification rate increased to 45 per cent in

August 2017, compared with 28 per cent in July 2017. However, there is a need to further increase the Mission's counter-IED capability.

10. On 29 September 2017, in Bariirre village of Awdheegle District, suspected Al-Shabaab militias staged a complex attack on a military base of the Somali National Army. Al-Shabaab managed to escape with eight to ten military vehicles, including three armoured vehicles mounted with guns, and an assortment of weapons, including 82-mm mortars, 12.7-mm anti-aircraft weapons and 23-mm anti-aircraft weapons. The attack on Bariirre was the fourth in 2017 and the third in September 2017 in which national army forces were overrun, pointing to a surge in Al-Shabaab operations and indicating the limited capacity of the national army to defend its positions. Furthermore, in the month of October, Somalia witnessed an Al-Shabaab attack in Mogadishu on a scale not previously seen. The blast at Zoobe junction in Mogadishu on 14 October claimed the lives of at least 358 people and injured 228 others, exposing serious flaws in intelligence and the broader political challenges facing the Federal Government of Somalia. The increasing frequency of Al-Shabaab attacks and the rising number of associated casualties threaten the fragile security gains made in Somalia ahead of the reduction in the number of AMISOM troops scheduled for the end of 2018.

11. Following the Mogadishu attack, the Director General of the National Intelligence and Security Agency, Abdullahi Mohamed Ali, and the Head of the Somali Police Force, Brigadier General Abdihakim Dahir Said, were removed from their posts by the Federal Cabinet on 29 October. This move aimed at restoring public confidence after an escalation in Al-Shabaab attacks in Mogadishu, including a complex attack on the Naso-Hablod hotel just two weeks after the deadly attack on 14 October. President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo returned to the country on 25 October, following a tour of three countries to marshal support and resources for an expanded offensive against Al-Shabaab in the wake of the deadly attacks on Mogadishu. The President indicated that he has secured the commitment of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Uganda to reinforce the efforts of the national security forces to counter Al-Shabaab.

12. In line with the mandate, AMISOM will undertake a gradual and phased reduction and reorganization of its forces aimed at providing a greater support role as the national security forces progressively take the lead in security tasks in the country. AMISOM, working closely with the Federal Government of Somalia and international partners, has pressed ahead with the implementation of the commitments made at the Conference held in London in May 2017 on the implementation of the national security architecture and the new security pact, the outcomes of the African Union-United Nations joint review and the new mandate of the African Union Peace and Security Council, in a complementary manner, to ensure effective operations.

13. Collectively, the Federal Government of Somalia and its partners have put in place the comprehensive approach to security mechanism to deliver the reforms aligned with the national security architecture. In August, November and December, the Federal Government, in consultation with the regional administrations, reached agreements on the outstanding political issues in the national security architecture (such as the distribution of forces, policies, structures and implementation plans) and successfully carried out an assessment to determine the operational readiness of the national security forces, all of which are necessary to deliver the envisioned security sector reforms.

14. The operational readiness assessment identified critical gaps that will affect the efficient and effective operation of the national security forces and the transition of security roles from AMISOM. In this regard, it is noted that the takeover by Somalia of primary security responsibility from AMISOM is dependent on enhancing the

capacity of the national security forces. As a result, the enhancement and better coordination of training support for the national security forces are critical.

Humanitarian situation

15. The humanitarian situation remains dire in many parts of Somalia. The Federal Government of Somalia requested a post-disaster/drought needs assessment, which brings together the humanitarian community and donors. The assessment seeks to evaluate the impact of the drought and the response required and evaluate the resilience level of the affected population with a view to drawing up a recovery and resilience framework. The underlying vision is to ensure that the next drought does not turn into a famine.

16. Since September 2017, rains have occurred across the country, marking the start of the *deyr* rainy season. The Shabelle River is already full in certain portions owing to rains in the Ethiopian highlands. Efforts are under way to strengthen embankments to prevent flooding. The onset of the rains resulted in movements of internally displaced persons to prepare land for farming. However, there are greater numbers still coming into settlements for internally displaced persons in Baidoa, Gaalkacyo and Jubbaland (Doolow, Luuq, Baardheere and Dhooble).

17. Humanitarian agencies have reported access challenges in Boosaaso, Qandala and Baidoa, affecting the area of influence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and therefore limiting life-saving interventions.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 2372 (2017)

Implementation of the national security architecture and the new Somalia pact

18. Working closely with the Federal Government of Somalia and international partners, AMISOM has pressed ahead with the implementation of the commitments made at the conference held in London in May 2017 on the national security architecture and the new security pact, the outcomes of the African Union-United Nations joint review and the communiqué of the 700th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, in a complementary manner, to ensure effective operations and a smooth transition from AMISOM-led to Somali-led security.

19. In follow-up to the inaugural conference of the Federal Government of Somalia and AMISOM on the transitioning of security responsibilities, which was held in July 2017, in August 2017, commanders of AMISOM and the national security forces held a planning session for joint coordinated operations for the rest of 2017 and beyond, with the main objectives of disrupting, degrading and defeating Al-Shabaab and other armed groups, protecting population centres, opening and securing main supply routes and agreeing to the handover of a number of forward operating bases.

20. AMISOM is participating fully in the implementation mechanism overseeing the delivery on the National Development Plan and the national security architecture through the comprehensive approach to security in the next four years. Since August, AMISOM components and units have realigned to participate in the implementation of the comprehensive approach to security and its relevant strands, as well as the relevant pillars of the Somalia Development and Reconstruction Facility/National Development Plan framework. Following the inaugural meeting on strand 1 of the comprehensive approach in late August 2017, AMISOM generated a matrix of prioritized activities with set milestones to realize the objective of ensuring effective AMISOM operations (military, police and civilian) in the implementation of the concept of operations and the mission implementation plan. Strand 1 would be

studying the matrix for operationalization through technical, operational and deeper coordination efforts.

Receiving Al-Shabaab defectors and supporting the Defectors Rehabilitation Programme

21. In resolution 2372 (2017), the Security Council mandated AMISOM to receive on a transitory basis Al-Shabaab defectors, as appropriate, and in coordination with the United Nations and the Federal Government of Somalia. In response to the presidential amnesty and the surrender of Mukhtar Robow, a senior Al-Shabaab leader, to the Federal Government, members of Al-Shabaab continue to renounce violence and extremist ideology. AMISOM and the Federal Government of Somalia continued to receive defectors and hand them over to the National Intelligence and Security Agency under existing relevant guidelines during the period under review.

22. AMISOM plays a key role in the outreach and reception phase, the first two pillars of the national programme for the treatment and handling of disengaging fighters and youth at risk, while other partners have concentrated on the pillars relating to screening, rehabilitation and reintegration. AMISOM has taken the initiative to build the capacity of personnel involved in the Defectors Rehabilitation Programme of the Federal Government of Somalia. Even though significant progress has been made towards handling defectors, there remain the challenges posed by the unclear policy on defectors and the lack of financial and infrastructural support for the Defectors Rehabilitation Programme.

Uniformed personnel

23. AMISOM uniformed personnel, deployed across the six sectors, currently number a maximum of 22,126.

Military component

24. The current military strength is 21,586 troops, which is projected to be reduced by 1,000 personnel to a total of 20,586 by 31 December 2017. The troops in theatre are composed of 6,220 soldiers from Uganda, 5,338 from Burundi, 3,664 from Kenya, 1,000 from Djibouti, 4,395 from Ethiopia and 75 staff officers from force headquarters. All AMISOM troop-contributing countries have been notified to effect reductions during their troop rotations in December 2017.

25. The security landscape in south-central Somalia remains comparatively stable in spite of isolated Al-Shabaab attacks in the form of vehicle-borne IEDs, ambushes, assassinations and grenade attacks. The problem of IEDs along the main supply routes linking forward operating bases remains persistent, constraining the freedom of movement and sustainability of AMISOM and the national security forces. The Al-Shabaab threat level remains high in Banadir region, including Mogadishu, where militants have continued to infiltrate vehicle-borne IEDs with the aim of disrupting public security and discrediting the Federal Government.

26. In pursuit of the strategic objectives set out in resolution 2372 (2017) of reducing the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and other opposition armed groups, AMISOM is currently engaged in Operation Safari Hunter along the Juba Corridor, in collaboration with the Somali national army and regional forces. Operation Stabilize Mogadishu is also ongoing, with the aim of clearing Al-Shabaab networks and restoring security in Mogadishu from vehicle-borne IED attacks. In line with the concept of operations of 2016, AMISOM has engaged in clearance operations for the main supply routes, which are aimed at securing key logistical supply routes in areas liberated from Al-Shabaab. These clearance operations are also meant to facilitate

humanitarian operations in all sectors, as well as to secure additional main supply routes in the long term.

27. Despite AMISOM having registered significant achievements in combating the Al-Shabaab threat and stabilizing Somalia, Al-Shabaab continues to exploit capacity gaps between AMISOM sectors and their overstretched lines of operation. This has enabled the group's continued freedom of movement and action. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab is still capable of swiftly amassing its militias and executing large-scale attacks, taking advantage of its ability to blend and hide within the local population and effectively using small squads or Amniyat cells to execute vehicle-borne IED attacks and carry out targeted assassinations.

Transition of security responsibilities from AMISOM to the national security forces

28. AMISOM forces continued to undertake joint operations with the national security forces, and Operation Stabilize Mogadishu is currently under way, with the aim of not only degrading Al-Shabaab, but also transferring operational experience to the national security forces through mentoring. AMISOM, in collaboration with partners, has also continued to train key personnel in the national security forces, both locally and regionally.

29. The Prime Minister, Hassan Khayre, launched the operational readiness assessment in Mogadishu on 15 August 2017. The exercise, which is led by the Federal Government with the active participation of AMISOM, the United Nations, international partners and the federal member states, is expected to yield a credible picture of the current state of the national security forces and provide the basis for planning the transition of security responsibilities from AMISOM to Somali security forces. In preparation for the gradual handover of security responsibilities, in September and October, AMISOM, in collaboration with partners, conducted the operational readiness assessment of the Somali national army, with the aim of verifying its operational capabilities, including staffing, training, equipment, sustainment capability and infrastructure. The table of organization and equipment defined in the Guulwade (Victory) Plan serves as the initial basis for decisions on staffing and equipment.

Police component

30. Under resolution 2372 (2017), the AMISOM police force was authorized to increase its number from 540 personnel to 1,040, consisting of 7 senior leadership team officers, 233 individual police officers (up from 113) and five formed police units of 160 each (up from three formed police units of 140 personnel each). However, the component is currently made up of 400 personnel, consisting of 6 senior leadership team officers, 114 individual police officers and two formed police units of 140 each, from Nigeria and Uganda, respectively.

31. The number is expected to increase gradually by 500 personnel, starting in December 2017 with an increase in the number of individual police officers and formed police units. The African Union Commission has a detailed deployment plan that is being implemented, including the augmentation of the current two formed police units to a strength of 160 from 140 by January 2017, as well as the deployment of the third formed police unit from Sierra Leone with 160 personnel; an increase in the numbers of individual police officers by 120, which will go into effect by the first quarter of 2018; and the deployment of two new formed police units of 160 personnel each. Nigeria has made an offer to provide the first additional formed police unit and deployment, which, following an assessment of operational capability, is expected before the end of the first quarter of 2018. Offers for the second formed police unit

are being solicited, and the unit is expected to be available for deployment by the second quarter of 2018.

32. The AMISOM police component has made significant achievements, despite the challenges encountered during the period from September to November 2017. In terms of operational support to the national police force, AMISOM police delivered professional, responsive and robust policing in accordance with the operational support mandate. Daily high-visibility patrols were conducted jointly with the national police force and other national security forces around vital installations, government buildings, places of worship, busy roads and junctions to proactively deter criminal activities. In addition, AMISOM police jointly carried out three intelligence-led cordon and search operations with the national security forces in various districts in Mogadishu. Support was also provided in terms of security during the excavation and evacuation of victims following the blast in Mogadishu on 14 October 2017. Joint operations conducted by the national police force and AMISOM police enable government officials, Somali communities and the international partners around Mogadishu, Kismaayo and Baidoa to conduct their daily activities and business peacefully. With the planned increase in the number of formed police units, AMISOM police plans to expand its operational support to the state capitals of HirShabelle (Jawhar), Jubbaland (Kismaayo) and South-West states (Baidoa).

33. AMISOM police continued to mentor and advise the Somali police officers, as well as conduct on-the-job training, in the four police divisions in Banadir region, Baidoa, Kismaayo and Beledweyne. The mentoring, which was based on theoretical and practical themes with clear objectives and outcomes, enhanced the individual capacities of the Somali police personnel and enabled them to provide competent basic policing services to their communities. With the proposed increase in AMISOM police strength, the component plans to expand mentoring to functional police stations in Jawhar and Cadaado, the capitals of HirShabelle and Galmudug states, respectively.

34. On the institutional police reform agenda, the component, jointly with Somali police leadership, UNSOM and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), completed an evaluation of the Somali police force with the aim of assessing its operational readiness in terms of numbers, capacities and locations. In addition, in September and October 2017, the police component procured and handed over assorted equipment, including investigation kits and three vehicles to the police stations in Mogadishu, Kismaayo and Baidoa. The items and logistics are intended to improve the working conditions at the police stations and to facilitate a quick response to emergency calls and security incidents.

35. In the effort to support the implementation of the new policing model, in November 2017, AMISOM police, with funding support from the Government of Denmark, assisted the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states with undertaking a mission to Nigeria to study the Nigerian model of policing, which operates under a federal structure, with a view to enabling informed decisions on a workable model for Somalia.

36. The AMISOM police component has also continued to develop operational and management policies for the national police force to assist in management, operations, command and control of police institutions. The communication policy, the drug use policy and the public order management policy for the federal and the state police are being developed. In addition, the component reactivated and operationalized the National Central Bureau at Somali Police Headquarters (office of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)). This has connected the National Central Bureau in Mogadishu to other international central bureaux, at which intelligence on high-profile criminals is shared and monitored.

37. In terms of enhancing the capacity of individual Somali police personnel, between July and November 2017, the AMISOM police component successfully trained 167 Somali police personnel from the federal and state levels on a package of specialized courses. The training programmes are aimed at building the individual and institutional capacities of the national police force to conduct effective policing and to conduct training for its own personnel. Similar courses, as well as other specialized police courses on counter-terrorism, middle and junior management and basic criminal investigations, will be conducted in December 2017, in all the federal member states, subject to the availability of funds.

38. AMISOM police continued to support the national police force in efforts to protect the rights of vulnerable persons, in particular women and girls. The AMISOM police component closely monitored the management and disposal of sexual and gender-based violence cases reported at various police stations. This resulted in the proper investigation and disposal of nine alleged cases of sexual and gender-based violence that were reported at the Mogadishu, Baidoa and Kismaayo police stations. Furthermore, the component mentored the Somali police gender focal point desk officers on the investigation and handling of cases and victims of sexual and gender-based violence, the referral pathway for the victims and the role of the first responder in incidences of such violence. In collaboration with the Women's Protection Unit of the civilian component, the AMISOM police also conducted training for the national police on the protection of women and children, with a focus on the special protection of women and girls under the Fourth Geneva Convention, sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, which was aimed at building the capacities of national police officers to respond to and prevent violations and protect the rights of women and girls.

Civilian component support for military and police tasks

39. The AMISOM civilian component has remained fully operational to support the Mission's military and police tasks in Somalia. AMISOM established a defector rehabilitation working group and continued to provide support for the civil-military cooperation field activities relating to early recovery and social reconciliation. In the area of dialogue and local reconciliation, AMISOM continues to work closely with the Federal Government of Somalia in activities aimed at helping to extend government authority. More specifically, AMISOM has engaged with clan elders and local communities in Shabelle Hoose, Baidoa and Kismaayo to encourage community-level dialogue and reconciliation.

40. In the coming period, AMISOM will be complementing its military operations with the execution of quick-impact projects, especially in the areas of education and community infrastructure development, as well as supporting the defector programme and social reconciliation among local communities.

Civil affairs, early recovery and stabilization

41. The AMISOM Civil Affairs Unit is working closely with the Federal Government and partners to deliver on early recovery and stabilization activities and roles that cut across the responsibilities of the civilian, police and military components of AMISOM. As part of early recovery and stabilization efforts, AMISOM has provided the key contact point for liaison with other partners. AMISOM engaged directly with local communities in the identification of relevant early recovery programmes for AMISOM and partners, while liaising with and between the Federal Government of Somalia, the administrations of the federal member states and local communities on matters related to early recovery and stabilization. AMISOM continues to identify and implement both quick-impact projects and peace-strengthening projects that relate to community recovery and the

extension of State authority. Equally, in order to enhance institutional performance within the federal member states, AMISOM has facilitated institutional capacity-building.

42. AMISOM continues to support the national stabilization strategy and all government programmes, such as the Wadajir National Framework for Local Governance, by facilitating the deployment of local administration and support for the establishment of an effective coordination mechanism for disengaged fighters. In this regard, AMISOM has continued to participate effectively in the monthly stabilization forum of strand 3 of the comprehensive approach to security.

Humanitarian support

43. The AMISOM Humanitarian Liaison Unit continues to enhance the relations between AMISOM and the humanitarian community and partners, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in order to facilitate the support necessary for the affected population, particularly in those areas recovered from Al-Shabaab. The Unit continues to work closely with the AMISOM military component and especially the civil-military coordination sections to secure main supply routes, including in areas recovered from Al-Shabaab, in particular those essential to improving the humanitarian situation and those critical for the provision of logistical support to AMISOM. The Unit also works with the Federal Government of Somalia and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management to facilitate the conduct of humanitarian needs assessments in its area of operations through the provision of logistical support and security and the delivery of humanitarian assistance in areas that have been secured from Al-Shabaab.

Protection of civilians and human rights

44. AMISOM has continued to implement its mandate in compliance with the provisions of resolution 2372 (2017) by ensuring that it carries out both its offensive and defensive operations in compliance with the applicable international human rights and international humanitarian laws. To further cement this, the AMISOM Force Commander has reminded the operational commanders of the directive to place a premium on the protection of civilians in all operational undertakings. The directive specifically instructs AMISOM commanders to comply with the Mission's indirect fire policy and the policy on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, to respect the culture and national laws and to ensure that AMISOM air operations are conducted in strict compliance with the applicable international humanitarian law.

45. At the technical level, AMISOM, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) continued to hold monthly meetings, at which issues of human rights, compliance with international humanitarian law, allegations of rights violations and any conduct or discipline issues that arose were discussed, decisions were taken on action and, in some cases, investigations into allegations were conducted.

46. The Mission also continues to deploy its Civilian Casualty Tracking, Analysis and Response Cell to track and document all allegations of civilian harm occasioned by its activities in AMISOM areas of responsibility in south-central Somalia. Increased awareness of the Cell and an emphasis on civilian casualty prevention and mitigation has been achieved through seven in-mission induction training sessions, which were held at Mission headquarters and in sectors 3, 4 and 6 for all components (military, police and civilian) in the period under review. Local NGOs are also involved under the civil-military cooperation arrangements with a view to explaining the presence and function of the AMISOM Civilian Casualty Tracking, Analysis and Response Cell. Despite funding challenges, the Cell has tracked allegations against

the Mission in the period under consideration and submitted its findings to the Mission leadership. In terms of making the Cell fully operational and effective, the African Union has deployed a Military Adviser to the Cell, a post that had been vacant until August 2017.

47. The Cell has compiled a list of individuals and their families who are eligible for the AMISOM ex gratia payment, which will be made as soon as funds are made available for that purpose. The list is being updated as required. Standard operating procedures on ex gratia payments to guide the amends process were drafted in October 2016. In response to an observed increase in road traffic accidents, standard operating procedures are being developed with a view to reducing the occurrence of such accidents. The major challenges faced include the lack of funds to implement the ex gratia payments reflected in the standard operating procedures, inadequate staffing numbers, leading to deficient representation in the sectors, delayed dissemination of information on civilian casualties from the sectors, unavailability of witnesses during investigations owing to the security situation and inadequate investigating capacity.

48. In order to address the issue of child soldiers, AMISOM, along with other international partners, continues to implement the 2017–2018 workplan focusing on children associated with armed conflict. In line with the mandate to refocus its activities towards its exit from Somalia, AMISOM has been taking practical steps to transfer some of its skills to identified and capable Somali nationals. During the period under consideration, the focus has been on training, mentoring and monitoring Somalis, in order to disseminate thematic knowledge, which they are expected to pass on to their colleagues in Mogadishu and the regions.

49. AMISOM has trained a pool of Somali trainers on child protection and the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers during armed conflict. These trainers have been mentored over the last six months to plan, prepare and undertake independent training activities for their counterparts in the respective institutions and security forces. Since the beginning of the year, the Mission has trained and qualified 65 trainers representing the various security forces and line ministries at both the federal and state levels. The trainers have now started supporting training activities and community engagement.

50. To facilitate closer collaboration between the Somali security forces and key line ministries, the mission has supported the establishment of a technical committee representing the ministries responsible for defence, internal security, women's rights and human rights, education and justice. This committee engages in vetting activities on all recruitment drives undertaken by the Government and also deals with issues relating to child soldiers as rights violations. This is being replicated across the thematic cells within the Protection Unit. To enhance buy-in, the Mission is organizing a high-level workshop at the end of November for principals of key line ministries and heads of training at the various training schools. This is to build more synergy between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states and to map out a way forward in dealing with disengaged child soldiers and prevent the recruitment and use of children as soldiers.

51. The Peace and Security Council has instructed the Mission to strengthen its human rights investigative capacity. The current investigative capability of the Mission is ad hoc. Discussions are under way on the possibility of recruiting additional human rights officers for the Mission, which would allow AMISOM to maintain human rights officers and investigators in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Kismaayo and Beledweyne.

52. Issues relating to the protection of women in armed conflict, including the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related

sexual violence, were incorporated into four induction programmes in the period under review. In addition, among other sources, the Ceebla crisis line has remained an instrumental tool for AMISOM to monitor violations, especially sexual violence committed against women and children (boys and girls). Furthermore, information, education and communication materials on sexual gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence were developed, printed and are available to support sensitization programmes on prevention and response to sexual violence in the period under consideration.

Gender mainstreaming and preventing and countering violent extremism

53. On 31 October and 1 November 2017, AMISOM reviewed its existing gender mainstreaming policy to take into account the Mission's focus on support to the Somali national security forces in incorporating gender issues, in line with the AMISOM transition.

54. The Mission is continuing to implement the African Union gender policy and resolution 1325 (2000) to enhance the implementation of the Mission's mandate. To this end, during the reporting period, the relevant unit within the Mission provided technical support to the relevant line ministries with regard to gender mainstreaming in the review process of the Constitution and, while representing AMISOM in strand 4 of the comprehensive approach to security, with regard to the implementation of the action plan on preventing and countering violent extremism.

IV. Coordination with the United Nations

55. UNSOM, UNSOS and AMISOM have increased their engagement at all levels, including in the strategic Senior Leadership Coordination Forum, in order to enhance coordination efforts on the ground. During the period under review, monthly meetings of the Forum were held, focusing mainly on coordination, information-sharing, security, human rights, logistics support, deployments and drawdown-related issues.

56. The civilian component of AMISOM continued its close collaboration with the United Nations through a monthly meeting of the working group on civil-military cooperation, the newly established AMISOM working group on defector rehabilitation and coordination and information-sharing meetings with the United Nations Integrated Electoral Support Group. The AMISOM-UNSOM-UNSOS technical-level meetings were held monthly in the period under review.

57. On the security front, several coordination forums meet to constantly review local, regional and international security developments. These forums include the airport security stakeholders committee, with the AMISOM crisis management team transitioning into a joint crisis management team to encompass the United Nations, AMISOM, the Federal Government of Somalia, diplomatic missions and partners in the Mission area. Decisions taken by the team are then acted upon by the joint crisis management working group, which is a technical body, to work out mitigation measures in response to any crisis situation. The security teams of AMISOM, the United Nations and the Federal Government of Somalia continue to conduct joint security assessments and work closely to successfully host major conferences and to protect civilians and prevent Al-Shabaab attacks in the green zones of Mogadishu, Kismaayo, Baidoa, Beledwyne, Johwar and Adaado. These concerted efforts have so far helped to thwart and repel several attacks targeting the airport and base camps.

V. United Nations logistical support

General status of United Nations support to AMISOM

58. The United Nations continues to support AMISOM through UNSOS pursuant to the memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and the African Union. The categories of support are related to logistics and do not include salaries, mission subsistence allowances, troop and police allowances or death and disability compensation, which are covered by the European Union on a scale that is not commensurate with that of United Nations peacekeeping missions. Some partners provide financial support through the AMISOM trust fund, which covers the recruitment of consultants specialized in mission training and the acquisition of operational equipment. The trust fund is currently depleted, and a donor conference convened on 9 October 2017 did not produce any contributions.

59. However, the reduction of the United Nations peacekeeping budget has had a negative impact on AMISOM. The withdrawal of three air assets from the UNSOS fleet has adversely affected the delivery of logistics supplies and critical support to AMISOM. An initial reduction of the flight hours in support of AMISOM to 115 hours, which was recently increased to 183 hours, also had a negative impact on the timely delivery of logistical support. This has further been compounded by the onset of the rainy season, which makes most of the roads impassable. In view of this inability to support remote positions by air, AMISOM has begun to reconfigure its forces and positions, concentrating on the main supply routes, where the IED threat remains high, while alternative measures to provide support are being explored. IEDs remain the main threat on the main supply routes and have resulted in casualties and the destruction of equipment at unacceptably high levels. The logistical constraint has had a negative effect on all AMISOM sectors, in particular in relation to the movement of urgent high-value supplies and rations. It has also resulted in the forward operating bases running out of supplies, including food, which is compounded by increased Al-Shabaab attacks on road resupply convoys, with the resultant losses of life.

60. It should also be noted that UNSOS has not yet completed the construction of the sector hubs owing to a lack of funding. For instance, sector 5, occupied by the Burundian contingent, does not have the facilities necessary in terms of fixed accommodation and storage facilities. Maintenance of the partner-owned equipment, mainly the armoured personnel carriers, which are the responsibility of UNSOS, is also a challenge; the serviceability rate of these armoured personnel carriers is currently at 46 per cent.

61. The "push quantities" concept for petroleum, oils and lubricants, which is designed to improve accountability and resource utilization, has already been introduced in Mogadishu international airport and commences in sector 4 from the beginning of November 2017. It is scheduled to be rolled out to other sectors at the beginning of December 2017. Efforts have been made to educate the end users on the implementation of the new system so that they appreciate and own it for better service delivery.

62. In line with its mandate to gradually hand over security responsibility to the national security forces, AMISOM handed over the Mogadishu stadium in November 2017. This facility houses two formed police units and troops of the Uganda People's Defence Forces. Alternative facilities have been identified in Jazeera 2. However, these facilities will require some effort to bring them up to an acceptable standard for occupation by the incoming personnel. The redeployment of the personnel is being planned in this light and a joint AMISOM-UNSOS team has already been established to assess the requirements and support needed for the development and upgrading of Jazeera.

VI. Observations

63. In the light of the above, I would like to make a number of brief observations:

(a) First, the operational readiness assessment identified critical gaps that affect the efficient and effective operation of the national security forces and implementation of the transition of security roles from AMISOM. The outcomes of the assessment, backed by the planned drawdown of 1,000 AMISOM military personnel in December 2017, escalating insecurity and the lack of resources for AMISOM and the national security forces to undertake robust military operations cast doubts on the envisioned timetable for the transition of security responsibility from AMISOM to the national security forces. In this regard, the development of a realistic conditions-based transition plan before 15 April 2018, with clear target dates for the transfer of security responsibility from AMISOM to Somali security forces is essential in order to ensure the alignment of support for the national security forces and the Federal Government of Somalia, as well to enable sustainable and predictable financing for AMISOM;

(b) Second, while the various management measures being put in place to enhance the Mission's operational effectiveness and efficiency, with UNSOS support, are welcome, it must be stressed that predictable and sustainable resourcing will be critical in delivering the operational requirements, including adequate logistical support, force enablers and multipliers for the successful implementation of the transition. Key gaps in the area of specialists, equipment for the level II hospitals and counter-IED capabilities need to be addressed and mission enabling units provided in all operational sectors. Resourcing for the whole of the transition, in a predictable and sustainable manner, for AMISOM and the national security forces, is key. In this regard, the consultations initiated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on funding options for AMISOM are welcome. These consultations should be as broad as possible and be undertaken in close collaboration with the African Union Commission, in order to ensure that key perspectives inform the report of the Secretary-General;

(c) Third, the finalization of the transition plan, following the presentation of the findings of the operational readiness assessment, will allow for division of labour between the national security forces, AMISOM and partners, as well as developing the overall requirements for support to AMISOM and the national security forces. This transition plan will also need to encompass planning on joint operations, as well as the collapse or handover of non-strategic forward operating bases, in order to generate the forces necessary to undertake offensive operations. This comprehensive verified assessment of current capabilities and requirements of the Somali security institutions should be the basis for enhanced coordination of the support provided by international partners to security institutions in Somalia, as well as considerations for resourcing the transition from AMISOM. In this respect, consideration should be given to the development of enhanced cooperation, coordination and coherence through agreed arrangements on the provision of support by partners to the security sector and institution-building in Somalia;

(d) Fourth, slow progress by the Federal Government on the establishment of local governance structures, coupled with slow recovery and stabilization efforts in liberated areas, has had a negative impact on the capitalization of AMISOM clearing and holding efforts. Therefore, timely deployment of the additional police personnel will be critical in expanding AMISOM police presence outside the state capitals and supporting the extension of policing services by the national police force in the recovered areas with a view to extending State authority and providing basic public services;

(e) Fifth, there are a number of positive developments with regard to the adherence by AMISOM to compliance and accountability standards. This has been achieved through concerted efforts to put in place a number of prevention, monitoring and reporting, and response mechanisms. Nevertheless, this can be sustained only through the continued strengthening of these mechanisms, including specialist staffing and adequate resourcing. The unique partnership in Somalia between the African Union and the United Nations provides an opportunity for the two organizations to forge an institutionalized partnership in the enhancement of compliance in peace support operations, with AMISOM as a starting point. Such a predictable partnership would be in line with the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed in April 2017 by the leadership of the two organizations;

(f) Last, while the transition plan focuses on Somali security institutions, sustained focus and attention on progress towards key political and governance-related conditions need to be monitored and supported, including at the level of the federal member states to ensure the sustainability of any security gains. This will also necessitate sustained political dialogue between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to allow for progress on critical security and political milestones. In this regard, the Federal Government of Somalia should be encouraged to demonstrate concrete strategic level progress on both the security and political fronts.

Annex II

Communiqué

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 741st meeting held on 19 December 2017, received a briefing on the situation in Somalia and the implementation of the mandate of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and adopted the following decision:

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the briefings by the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for Somalia and Head of AMISOM, Ambassador Francisco Madeira, the AMISOM Force Commander, Lieutenant General Osman Noor Soubagleh, and the Special Representative of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General for Somalia, Mr. Michael Keating. Council **also takes note** of the statements made by the representatives of Egypt, in its capacity as an African Member of the UN Security Council (A3); Ethiopia, in its capacity as, both Chair of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and a member of the A3; IGAD; and the European Union (EU);

2. **Recalls** its previous decisions on the situation in Somalia and AMISOM, including Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(DCC) adopted at its 700th meeting held on 12 July 2017; Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(DCLXXXIV) adopted at its 684th meeting held on 28 April 2017; Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(DCXLIX) adopted at its 649th meeting held on 16 January 2017; Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM (DCXXII) adopted at its 622nd meeting held on 6 September 2016; Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM (DCVIII) adopted at its 608th meeting held on 29 June 2016; and Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.2(DXCV) adopted at its 595th meeting held on 28 April 2016;

3. **Also recalls** UNSC Resolution 2372 (2017), particularly paragraph 9, in which the Security Council requests the AU to keep the UNSC regularly informed on the implementation of AMISOM's mandate;

4. **Takes note** of the progress made in the political process in Somalia, in particular with regard to State formation process, the constitutional review, as well as the electoral system towards 2020 elections. In the same context, Council **welcomes** the signing of an important reconciliation agreement between the President of Galmudug and the Head of AL Suna Wal Jammah, and **congratulates** President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmaajo for the convening of the nine-day high-level consultative meeting with the top political leadership of the country. Council **commends** the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) for its continued efforts in the search for a lasting solution to the protracted political and security challenges facing Somalia and **reiterates** its commitment to continue supporting the Federal Government of Somalia in achieving its security and political goals;

5. **Notes with deep concern** the growing capacity of al-Shabaab and its continued attacks against the innocent population, the symbols of the Federal Government and AMISOM personnel. In this regard, Council **strongly condemns** these terrorist attacks and **expresses** AU's heartfelt condolences to Government and people of Somalia for the loss of lives and **wishes speedy recovery** to all those who have sustained injuries;

6. **Also expresses its heartfelt condolences** to the Governments of the AMISOM Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) as well as to the immediate families of all AMISOM personnel who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the promotion of peace, security, stability and reconciliation in Somalia. Council

encourages AMISOM to remain resolute and steadfast in discharging its mandate until the al-Shabaab terrorist group is completely eliminated and Somalia is pacified;

7. **Welcomes** the progress made to date in the fight against the al-Shabaab terrorist group, thanks to the joint efforts by AMISOM and the Somali National Security Forces (SNSF), noting al-Shabaab's unprecedented capacities. In this respect, Council **wishes to underline** the urgent need for AMISOM to be equipped with the necessary capacity, including force enablers and multipliers;

8. **Strongly reaffirms the need** for AMISOM to be provided with a predictable and sustainable funding, with a view to enabling it to more effectively discharge its mandate, in line with the conclusions of the AU-UN Joint Review;

9. **Expresses** its gratitude to the UN, the EU and other bilateral, as well as multilateral partners for their continued support for AMISOM operations against al-Shabaab and **urges** them to pursue and intensify their support;

10. **Reiterates the urgent need** for greater coordination and coherence in the provision of support to the building of a capable and inclusive Somalia Security Sector, with a view to expedite the progress required in facilitating effective assumption of full responsibility by the Somalia national security institutions from AMISOM. In this context, Council **reiterates the need** for partners to work closely with the Somali authorities and AMISOM to ensure enhanced coordination of support, including in the conduct of bilateral capacity-building initiatives and offensive operations;

11. **Further reiterates the need** for a responsive, effective, efficient and responsible field support platform as a strategic enabler to AMISOM operations. In this regard, Council **requests** the UN Support Office to Somalia (UNSOS) to continue to enhance its delivery of support package to AMISOM, taking into account the need to strengthen the role of the AU Special Representative and Head of AMISOM to this effect, in line with the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and UN on the provision of support to AMISOM;

12. **Takes notes** of the outcomes of the Somalia Security Conference and the Somalia Partnership Forum which took place on 4 and 5 December in Mogadishu, and **underscores** that the continued presence of AMISOM in Somalia and the implementation of a viable transition necessitates the securing of predictable and sustainable funding for AMISOM and Somali security institutions;

13. **Welcomes** the steps being already taken by the Commission in addressing the current resource gaps and **requests** the Chairperson of the Commission to enhance its engagements with the UN Secretary General and other partners, at the required level, in securing predictable and sustainable funding for AMISOM, including through the utilisation of UN Assessed Contributions for the payment of allowances for AMISOM uniformed personnel, bearing in mind the successes made by the Mission, the transition time-frame proposed by the AU-UN Joint Review and, the reality that AMISOM represents an exemplary AU-UN strategic and operational partnership in the implementation of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter and in the spirit of the UN-AU Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed on 19 April 2017;

14. **Urges** the UNSC to consider the report of the AU-UN Joint Review and to endorse its recommendations, in order to pave the way for its speedy and effective implementation, taking into consideration the need to avoid a security vacuum in Somalia and the region, enhance coordination and ensure predictable funding for AMISOM;

15. **Takes note** of the findings of Operational Readiness Assessment (ORA) on Somali National Army (SNA) and **notes with concern** that the SNA, in its present state, is not yet in a position to take over or sustainably hold forward operating positions that may be handed over to it by AMISOM. In this regard, the Council **reiterates** that the transition to Somali led security and the drawdown of AMISOM need to be condition-based and gradual, to ensure that the hard won gains so far made against al-Shabaab are not reversed;

16. **Endorses** the decisions of the 25th meeting of the Military Operations Coordination Committee on 1 December 2017, which *inter alia*, envisages the revision of AMISOM Concept of Operations (CONOPS) in view of the changing dynamics in the security and political situation on the ground;

17. **Underlines the need** for the AU to renew its commitment to peace, security and stability in Somalia, taking into account the political and security dispensation in the country and the region, since the deployment of AMISOM in 2007;

18. **Reaffirms its full support** to the authorities and the people of Somalia, as well as its determination to spare no efforts towards peace, security and reconciliation in Somalia;

19. **Requests** the Commission, pursuant to paragraph 9 of the UNSC Resolution 2372 (2017), to transmit this Communiqué to the UN Secretary-General for onward transmission to the UNSC for its action, as appropriate;

20. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matters.

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the forty-seventh submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015), paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016) and paragraph 6 of resolution 2393 (2017), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to agencies of the United Nations system[1] and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 to 31 December 2017.

[1] Inputs provided from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Organization for Migration, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations Mine Action Service, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat.

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II. Major developments

Box 1
Key points: December 2017

1. During the reporting period, military activity in parts of the country had a significant impact on the humanitarian situation, including further damage to civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools, affecting the ability of United Nations agencies and their partners to deliver much-needed humanitarian support.

2. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate for the 393,000 people living in besieged eastern Ghutah, in Rif Dimashq, with daily shelling on several areas. While 29 urgent medical cases were evacuated on 30 December, more than 600 additional individuals inside eastern Ghutah continued to wait for medical evacuations.

3. During the reporting period, there were reports of shelling on Damascus, which resulted in civilian deaths and injuries as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure. People trapped in the besieged towns of Fu'ah and Kafraya continued to call for winter clothing and medicine to address urgent needs.

4. Hostilities between forces of the Government of Syria and non-State armed opposition groups intensified considerably in the northern countryside of Hama Governorate and in southern Idlib Governorate during the reporting period. This resulted in civilian deaths, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the displacement of tens of thousands of people.

5. Death and injury due to landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices continued to be reported with alarming frequency in Raqqah city. According to partners on the ground, more than 220 civilians have died or have been injured in blasts since the city was retaken from ISIL in October 2017.

6. In December, United Nations humanitarian assistance reached millions of people in need in the Syrian Arab Republic, including more than 3 million who received food assistance through regular deliveries. Some 60,000 were reached through two United Nations humanitarian inter-agency cross-line convoys in hard-to-reach areas. None of the people besieged in the Syrian Arab Republic were reached in December through inter-agency convoys. More than 800,000 were reached through cross-border convoys.

7. The United Nations estimates that some 2.9 million people are living in hard-to-reach and besieged locations in the Syrian Arab Republic. This number includes 417,566 people living in nine besieged locations throughout the country.

3. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria held the eighth round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva between 28 November and 14 December 2017. The round was focused on the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), with particular emphasis on the constitutional process and United Nations-supervised elections.

4. The Special Envoy continued diplomatic engagement in Washington, D.C., Moscow and Astana to maintain the momentum in support of United Nations-led intra-Syrian talks in Geneva. On 22 December in Astana, the guarantors of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic of

4 May, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation and Turkey, agreed on two documents: an agreement to form a working group on the release of detainees/abductees, the handover of bodies and the identification of missing persons; and a joint statement on humanitarian mine action. The Astana guarantors also issued a joint statement that expressed support for the convening of a Syrian national dialogue congress in Sochi, Russian Federation, describing it as an initiative to complement United Nations intra-Syrian talks in Geneva.

5. During the reporting period, military activity in parts of the country had a significant impact on the humanitarian situation, causing further damage to civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools and affecting the ability of United Nations agencies and their partners to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance. At the same time, in areas where local agreements had been reached between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups, relative calm was reported. Military activities, including air strikes, continued in Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr, Idlib, Hama, Rif Dimashq and other governorates.

6. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate for the estimated 393,000 people living in besieged eastern Ghutah, in Rif Dimashq. Daily shelling on several areas of eastern Ghutah, including Harasta, Nashabiyah, Duma, Ayn Tarma, Irbin, Zamalka, Saqba, Misraba and Bayt Nayim, resulted in civilian deaths and internal displacement within the besieged area. Schools were closed in eastern Ghutah as a result of the level of the hostilities. The prices for basic goods decreased owing to sporadic commercial access to the area, but remained some 30 times higher than in neighbouring Damascus city, far beyond the purchasing power of most residents of eastern Ghutah. The humanitarian situation inside the besieged enclave was further compounded by the inability of United Nations humanitarian convoys to reach the besieged area during the month. Residential neighbourhoods of Damascus city were also reportedly attacked from eastern Ghutah during the reporting period, resulting in death, injury and material damage.

7. From 26 to 28 December, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross evacuated 29 urgent medical cases from eastern Ghutah, together with 56 family members. Evacuees were taken to hospitals in Damascus for treatment. Under an agreement reportedly reached between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Army of Islam, the latter was to release captives. The United Nations was not party to the agreement or the negotiations. While the United Nations takes note of the medical evacuation of 29 cases, hundreds of other individuals inside eastern Ghutah continue to wait for their medical evacuations. Furthermore, some 18 people — including 4 children — are reported to have died without receiving required medical care over the past two months.

8. The besieged enclave of Bayt Jinn in Rif Dimashq, including the towns of Bayt Jinn, Mazra'at Bayt Jinn and Mughr al-Mir, has an estimated population of 3,646. In late December, following a period of prolonged siege and intensified military attacks, including air strikes, a local agreement was reached between the non-State armed opposition groups and the Syrian authorities in the area. On 30 December, 10 buses left the area, carrying 270 fighters and civilians, for Dar'a and Idlib Governorates. The United Nations was not a party to the agreement or the negotiations leading up to it.

Figure I
Key dates in December 2017

26-28 December
Evacuation of 29 medical cases from eastern Ghutah
30 December
Reported attack on INGO medical warehouse in Idlib Governorate
30 December
Evacuation of fighters and their families from the Bayt Jinn enclave

Abbreviation: INGO, international non-governmental organization.

9. Hostilities between forces of the Government of Syria and non-State armed opposition groups intensified considerably in the north-eastern countryside of Hama Governorate, the southern and south-eastern countryside of Idlib Governorate, and the southern countryside of Aleppo Governorate, resulting in civilian deaths and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, as well as large-scale displacement. From 1 November to 24 December, a total of 60,310 people were reportedly displaced from Si'in, Uqayribat and Hamra' Districts, in northern Hama, as well as Tamani'ah and Sanjar Districts, in southern Idlib. At least 22 sites for internally displaced persons and more than 6,000 residences were reported to have been abandoned. Displacement continued to increase towards the end of the reporting period. Many of those forced to flee had already been displaced. Of the 1.7 million people in need in Idlib Governorate, more than 1 million had been internally displaced before the recent escalation in violence.

10. During the reporting period, an additional 14,000 civilians returned to Raqqah city, where some 34,000 civilians were reported to have returned in previous months. Exact numbers remain difficult to verify, as some people return to Raqqah merely to check on their houses and subsequently leave, while others stay. Returns are also taking place to neighbourhoods that constituted the last stronghold of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). These houses are particularly heavily mined and riddled with deadly booby traps. Deaths and injuries due to explosions continue to be reported at alarming frequency; trauma cases have nearly doubled in recent months. According to partners on the ground, more than 220 civilians have died or have been injured in blasts since Raqqah city was retaken from ISIL in October 2017. Each week, between 30 and 50 civilians continue to arrive at international non-governmental organization trauma stabilization points in Raqqah city, in need of trauma care. Demining activities are reportedly progressing slowly, owing in part to the large amount of destruction and the complexity of some of the devices left behind by ISIL. Humanitarian agencies therefore continue to emphasize that, owing to the high prevalence of landmines, booby traps and explosive remnants of war, Raqqah city is not safe for civilian returns.

11. In addition to the threat posed by unexploded ordnance, up to 80 per cent of all buildings in Raqqah city are severely damaged and at risk of collapse. The Raqqah Civil Council has conducted cleaning and rubble removal campaigns in many neighbourhoods; however, the level of destruction means that such work will take some time. Unconfirmed reports have been received that dead bodies remain under the rubble. Returnees also reportedly face additional challenges in view of a shortage of basic necessities and services. For example, water through the network remains unavailable in most of the city's neighbourhoods, and small-scale water-trucking

services provided by local authorities fall short of meeting current needs. Electricity is available in a few neighbourhoods and only through communal generators, as the electrical network requires extensive repairs. The availability of health services in the city remains very limited, with only a few health clinics currently operational.

12. Fighting between ISIL and forces of the Government of Syria in southern rural Dayr al-Zawr Governorate continued along the western bank of the Euphrates River in December. An estimated 229,700 people within Dayr al-Zawr were displaced between July and mid-December, with more than 60,000 currently displaced in camps located in Raqqah and Hasakah Governorates. At the same time, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) reportedly continued to advance along the eastern bank of the Euphrates River. The ongoing military operations reportedly continued to lead to civilian deaths and injuries. The threat of explosive ordnance to civilians was also of major concern in Dayr al-Zawr, particularly to those returning to their areas of origin following the expulsion of ISIL.

13. The Department of Defense of the United States of America publicly reported that in December, the United States-led coalition had carried out 177 strikes against ISIL targets in Dayr al-Zawr, Hasakah and Homs Governorates. More than 95 per cent of those were reported to have been near Albu Kamal, in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. In addition, the coalition publicly reported that it had conducted air strikes in the middle Euphrates River Valley region on 1 December, as well as operations with coalition-partner forces near Tanf on 13 December and in the Hamad desert on 23 December.

14. On 7 December, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation publicly reported on support operations carried out during the previous week in Albu Kamal and on the western shore of the Euphrates River, as well as joint operations carried out on 3 December on the eastern shore of the Euphrates, to eradicate ISIL and re-establish government control of the Syrian/Iraqi border. On 11 December, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, ordered the partial withdrawal of Russian troops from the Syrian Arab Republic.

15. The Ministry of Defence of the Syrian Arab Republic publicly reported that government forces and their allies had conducted operations against the Nusrah Front on 10 December in Hama Governorate and on 6, 11 and 14 December in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, retaking many towns and villages and confiscating weapons and improvised explosive devices left behind by ISIL.

Protection

16. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians and damage and destroy civilian infrastructure throughout the month. Explosive weapons continue to be fired into populated areas, indiscriminately killing and injuring civilians, destroying and damaging vital infrastructure and leaving communities littered with explosive remnants of war that continue to kill and injure civilians and impede humanitarian access. The large number of civilian casualties and the scale of civilian destruction remain a strong indication that violations of the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and of the resulting prohibition on the launching of indiscriminate attacks, are continuing. Children are particularly affected by the fighting.

17. Fighting continued to affect civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, markets and places of worship. On the basis of information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),

civilian casualties occurred in various governorates (see annex), in possible violation of international humanitarian law. OHCHR has documented alleged incidents perpetrated by parties to the conflict, including government forces and their allies, non-State armed opposition groups and their allies, and Security Council-designated terrorist groups.

18. Despite the call made to the Syrian authorities by the Human Rights Council in its resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22 to cooperate with OHCHR, including through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights, OHCHR reporting remains limited, as the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has not granted access to the country.

19. In addition to violations documented by OHCHR, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic provided OHCHR with information on alleged violations. In a note verbale received on 8 January, the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office at Geneva and specialized institutions in Switzerland provided OHCHR with a list of reported victims and injured civilians between 22 November and 21 December in the governorates of Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Dar'a, Suwayda', Homs, Hama, Tartus, Ladhiqiyah, Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr, Hasakah and Qunaytirah. A total of 37 civilians, including 9 children, were reported to have been killed, while 128 people, including 40 children, were reported to have been injured. The casualties reportedly had resulted from mortars and improvised explosive devices.

20. The United Nations and its health partners received reports of 16 attacks that had affected health-care facilities and personnel in December. Six attacks were reported in the eastern Ghutah region of Rif Dimashq, comprising four attacks on primary health centres and two on health workers. Six attacks were reported in Idlib, comprising attacks on two hospitals, one medical warehouse (in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man) and three primary health centres (in Sinjar, Khan Shaykhun and Dana subdistricts). In Homs, one paramedic was reportedly killed; in Hama, three hospitals in Kafr Zayta were reportedly attacked; and in Dar'a, one hospital was reportedly attacked.

21. Educational facilities also continued to suffer the impact of the fighting. One incident occurred on 28 December, when helicopters dropped barrel bombs on a school complex east of Babulin village, Idlib Governorate, partially destroying the school buildings. Another incident took place on 18 December, when a mortar shell landed in a government-owned school during the afternoon shift of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Dar'a city. Five UNRWA students were slightly injured, and the school was evacuated. On 3 December, air strikes near the Sanabel al-Fastat School, in Hamuriyah town, Rif Dimashq, were reported to have rendered the school inoperable and caused civilian casualties. On 4 December, air strikes near a school in Samiriyah village, in the southern countryside of Aleppo Governorate, reportedly injured a female teacher and damaged the school building. Also on 4 December, air strikes near the Umm al-Amad Primary School, in Umm al-Amad village, in the southern countryside of Aleppo Governorate, were reported to have partially damaged the school building. On 7 December, several schools in the western countryside of Dar'a were reportedly vandalized by ISIL affiliate the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army, with documents and facilities set on fire. Ten school personnel (teachers and assistants) were reportedly also abducted by the group and brought to Ma'arbah, in the Yarmuk Basin area. On 7 December, air strikes on southern rural Aleppo Governorate reportedly damaged several schools in the villages of Hanutah, Hamidiyah and Umm al-Amad. The schools were rendered inoperable. On 16 December, air strikes on Tall al-Daman

village, in southern rural Aleppo, reportedly hit the school in the village, causing material damage. On 17 December, a shell reportedly landed on the Asa'd Akil School, in the Halab al-Jadidah neighbourhood of Aleppo city, injuring two school staff and several students, in addition to causing material damage.

Humanitarian access

Box 2
Key points: humanitarian access

1. In December, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need, including from within the Syrian Arab Republic. Regular programming reached many people in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 3 million who received food assistance through 1,500 deliveries.

2. In December, two humanitarian inter-agency cross-line convoys delivered lifesaving assistance to 60,000 people in the hard-to-reach locations of Harbinafsih, in Hama Governorate, and Hulah, in Homs Governorate. Those deliveries were delayed, following a reduction in the agreed number of beneficiaries by one third compared with what initially had been approved under the access plan for October-December. No inter-agency cross-line convoys to any of the besieged locations were authorized during the month of December.

3. Cross-border assistance remains a vital part of the humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic. Since the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 2165 (2014) in July 2014, assistance has been delivered from Turkey to millions of Syrians in various parts of Aleppo, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah and Hama Governorates, and from Jordan to Dar'a, Qunaytirah and Suwayda' Governorates. In December, some 653 trucks in 28 convoys delivered lifesaving assistance to more than 800,000 people in need in northern and southern areas of the Syrian Arab Republic. Although access impediments imposed by armed actors and local authorities increased in the north-western part of the country, assistance continued at levels similar to those in the past.

4. The Syrian authorities continued the removal and delisting of medical supplies from inter-agency cross-line convoys, with supplies sufficient for more than 5,800 treatments either removed from convoys or not allowed to be loaded in December (see table 2). This brought the total number of medical items removed or not allowed to be loaded to more than 645,000 since the beginning of the year.

5. The United Nations estimates that, as of December 2017, some 2.9 million people in total were living in hard-to-reach and besieged locations in the Syrian Arab Republic (compared with 2.98 million in October 2017). That number included 417,566 people (compared with 419,920 in October 2017) living in nine besieged locations throughout the country and 2.49 million people living in hard-to-reach areas. Qabun, in Damascus Governorate, has been removed from the United Nations list of besieged locations. Ninety-five per cent of the total besieged population is besieged by forces of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Two per cent of the total besieged population is besieged by non-State armed opposition groups, and 3 per cent of the total besieged population is besieged by both government forces and non-State armed opposition groups.

22. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need remained extremely challenging in many areas of the country as a result of active conflict, shifting conflict lines, administrative impediments and deliberate restrictions imposed on the

movement of people and goods by the parties to the conflict. In particular, access for the United Nations and its partners to those people living in besieged and hard-to-reach locations remained a critical concern.

23. The United Nations estimates that, as of December 2017, approximately 417,566 people (compared with 419,920 in October 2017) were living in nine areas under siege. Qabun, with a population of 2,500, in Damascus Governorate, has been removed from the United Nations list of besieged locations, as the movement of civilians has improved and commerce has been restored to a certain degree. An area is considered by the United Nations to be besieged when it is surrounded by armed actors, with the sustained effect that civilians, the sick and the wounded cannot regularly exit and humanitarian assistance cannot regularly enter. Of the nine besieged locations nationwide in the Syrian Arab Republic, six areas (accounting for 95 per cent of the total besieged population) are besieged by government forces, one area (3 per cent of the total besieged population) by both government forces and non-State armed opposition groups and two areas (2 per cent of the total besieged population) by non-State armed opposition groups. In addition to those in besieged locations, it is estimated that some 2.49 million people are living in hard-to-reach locations. While that figure represents a decrease compared with the previous estimate of 2.56 million, mainly as a result of access improvements in formerly ISIL-held Raqqah Governorate, parts of south-western Aleppo Governorate have now been designated as hard to reach, owing to access constraints resulting from an intensification of the hostilities between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups.

Table 1
Besieged locations, December 2017

Governorate	*Location*	*Population*	*Besieged by*
Damascus	Yarmuk	12 520	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups
Idlib	Fu'ah	5 900	Non-State armed opposition groups
Idlib	Kafraya	2 200	Non-State armed opposition groups
Rif Dimashq/ Damascus	Irbin and surrounding area (Irbin, Zamalka and Jawbar)	49 300	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Harasta area (Harasta, Mudayra and Misraba)	56 535	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Duma area (Duma, Shaffuniyah and Hawsh al-Dawahirah)	150 100	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Kafr Batna area (Kafr Batna, Saqba, Ayn Tarma, Hammurah, Jisrayn, Aftris, Hazzah, Hawsh al-Ash'ari, Bayt Siwa and Muhammadiyah)	125 600	Government of the Syrian Republic
Rif Dimashq	Nashabiyah area (Nashabiyah, Bayt Nayim, Salihiyah, Utaya and Hazrama)	11 765	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Bayt Jinn	3 646	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Total		**417 566**	

24. The United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for October and November was further extended until December. Under the plan, access to 33 locations in besieged and hard-to-reach areas was requested, with the objective of reaching a total of 1,206,000 people. Inter-agency convoys are prepared for areas with multisectoral needs where access is limited, to ensure that United Nations support is needs-based. In December, only two inter-agency convoys could be dispatched, reaching some 60,000 people in need in two hard-to-reach locations (see table 2 for a list of inter-agency convoys deployed in December). No convoys were authorized for deployment to besieged locations. The total number of people reached under the October-December plan was 398,950, or 33 per cent of the total number of people to whom access had originally been requested under the plan. This number does not include convoys carrying supplies delivered by other humanitarian actors.

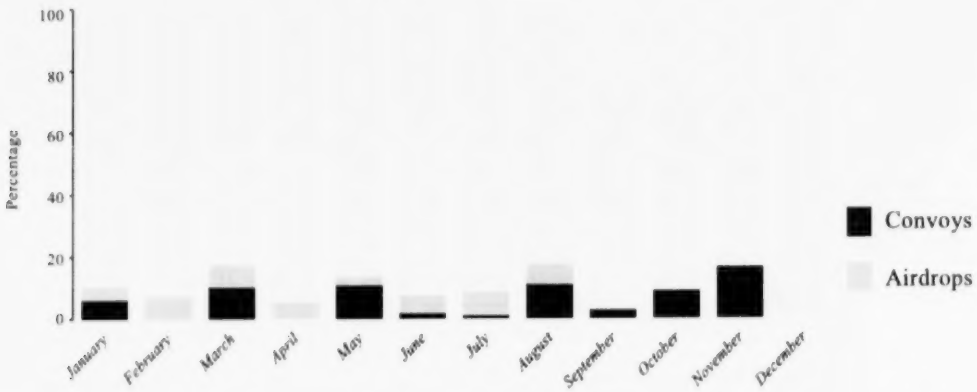
Table 2
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoys, December 2017

Date	*Location*	*Requested target (number of beneficiaries)*	*Number of beneficiaries reached*	*Type of assistance*
14 December	Hulah	71 000	50 000	Multisectoral
14 December	Harbinafsih	18 000	10 000	Multisectoral

25. Individual agencies continued to submit requests for single-agency deliveries to locations throughout the country during the reporting period. Single-agency deliveries are undertaken in areas where access is less challenging. In December, the World Food Programme submitted 1,501 official requests to the authorities to obtain facilitation letters for the transport of food assistance to locations throughout the country, of which 1,500 were approved. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees submitted 60 facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits, of which 58 were approved and 2 were rejected, with security concerns cited as the reason. Both international and Syrian non-governmental organizations continued to undertake needs assessments and to provide support (including medical, educational, psychosocial and protection services) in besieged and hard-to-reach locations, under challenging circumstances, in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Figure II

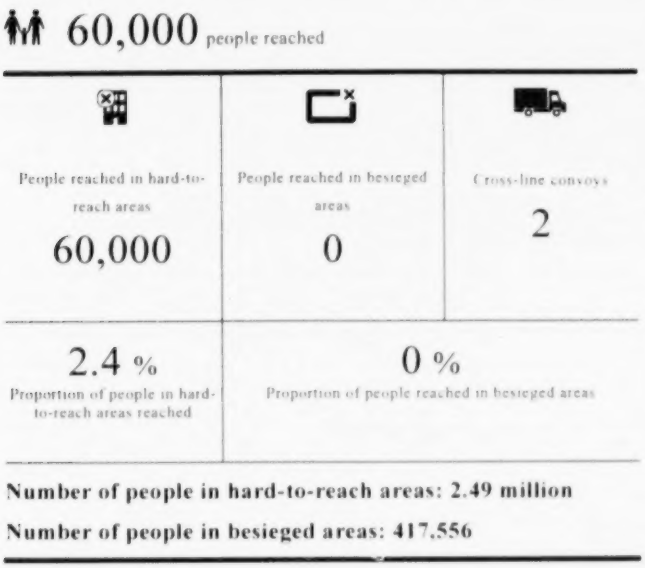
United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations: percentage of people reached each month in besieged areas, 2017



26. Humanitarian access continues to face restrictions imposed by parties to the conflict in besieged and hard-to-reach locations. On average in 2017, only 27 per cent of beneficiaries scheduled for assistance under specific requests were reached through inter-agency cross-line convoys each month. Bureaucratic impediments, such as the non-issuance of facilitation letters by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, continue to be a significant factor in these delays or non-deliveries, despite the creation of a tripartite coordination mechanism to address such problems. The mechanism met once during the reporting period, on 12 December, to discuss issues related to the deployment of humanitarian convoys, including to besieged eastern Ghutah, which remained inaccessible to the United Nations in December.

27. The United Nations and its partners continue to provide support to those who have been displaced by fighting in and around Raqqah as part of a coordinated response in the Syrian Arab Republic. United Nations agencies, through regular programming, along with humanitarian partners, have continued to provide multisectoral assistance to 420,000 people in need each month in Raqqah, Hasakah and Dayr al-Zawr Governorates.

Figure III
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations, December 2017



28. Life-saving and life-sustaining medical items sufficient for more than 5,800 treatments were rejected or removed from convoys in December by the Syrian authorities, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Details regarding the treatments and supplies removed are shown in table 3. Additional medical supplies were scheduled to be delivered as part of the inter-agency convoy plan; however, only two inter-agency convoys were able to proceed in December. Since the beginning of 2017, WHO has submitted 11 single-agency requests to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to gain access to 14 locations in six governorates. The Government approved nine requests, and one was rejected. One request remains pending.

Table 3
Medical supplies removed from humanitarian convoys, December 2017

Location	*Number of treatments*	*Types of supplies*
Harbinafsih	5 110	Ketamine hydrochloride; atracurium besylate; miconazole nitrate; dobutamine hydrochloride; oxytocin injections 10 IU; syringe 5 ml disposable
Hulah	690	Thoracic drain bottles 700 ml; ketamine hydrochloride; atracurium besylate; beclomethasone dipropionate; dobutamine hydrochloride; oxytocin injections 10 IU

Humanitarian response

29. In December, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need through all available access modalities, including: (a) regular programming from within the Syrian Arab Republic, whereby humanitarian deliveries reach those in need without crossing conflict lines;

(b) cross-line convoys, whereby assistance from within the country is delivered across conflict lines; and (c) cross-border deliveries, whereby assistance is provided from Jordan and Turkey to those in need (see table 4). In addition to the United Nations and its partners, non-governmental organizations continued to deliver lifesaving assistance to people in need. The Government continues to provide services both in areas under its control and in many areas beyond its control. Local authorities in many areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups also continue to provide services where possible.

Table 4
People reached by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities, December 2017

Organization	*Number of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	20 000
International Organization for Migration	195 000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	2 700 000
United Nations Children's Fund	>4 000 000
United Nations Development Programme	91 607
United Nations Population Fund	500 000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	400 000
World Food Programme	>3 000 000
World Health Organization	1 890 000

30. During the reporting period, cross-border deliveries continued from Turkey and Jordan into the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017) (see figure IV). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including its contents, its destination and the number of beneficiaries expected to be reached.

31. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations has conducted more than 714 cross-border consignments, with more than 18,154 trucks (12,536 by way of Bab al-Hawa and 1,821 by way of Bab al-Salam, from Turkey; and 3,797 by way of Ramtha, from Jordan). The United Nations cross-border operations complement the aid provided by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations that provide services to millions more from neighbouring countries.

32. In December, the United Nations and its implementing partners delivered food assistance for more than 520,000 people through cross-border deliveries from Turkey and Jordan. Moreover, the United Nations conducted health and medical deliveries, providing more than 630,000 treatments, through the cross-border mechanism. In the northern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) improved water quality and sanitation for 73,000 people through the repair and rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems and the distribution of hygiene kits, jerry cans and water purification tablets. In addition, UNICEF screened 25,783 children and pregnant and lactating women for acute malnutrition. Of the children screened, 197 were treated for severe acute malnutrition. UNICEF also enrolled 4,514 children, ranging from 5 to 17 years of age, in formal education. In

addition, 428 children between the ages of 5 and 19 were enrolled in non-formal education. In the southern governorates of Dar'a and Qunaytirah, more than 473,000 people benefited from improved access to clean water through maintenance operations with respect to water and sanitation systems. Of those people, 73,684 were reached with interventions under the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) initiative, such as household water treatment, water vouchers and the rehabilitation and repair of sanitation facilities and water systems. Humanitarian partners also continued to provide nutrition services to more than 7,323 people in 10 communities in Dar'a Governorate and in 9 communities in Qunaytirah Governorate. A total of 3,067 children under the age of 5 were screened for acute malnutrition. Of the children screened, 89 were identified as suffering from moderate acute malnutrition and 17 as suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Those identified and diagnosed were treated through therapeutic and supplementary nutrition programmes at six health centres and one mobile clinic. In addition, 889 pregnant and lactating women were screened for acute malnutrition, of whom 117 received the necessary treatment. Moreover, during the reporting period cross-border oral polio vaccine campaign activities in Idlib, Aleppo, Hama and Homs Governorates were wrapped up. By the end of December, an additional 167,338 children under the age of 5 had been vaccinated, out of a total of 641,967 children targeted (559,695 children were vaccinated in November). The United Nations Population Fund reached some 410,035 people with support in terms of reproductive health, efforts to address gender-based violence, and youth empowerment.

33. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations during the reporting period, monitoring 653 trucks used in 28 consignments by seven United Nations entities, confirming the humanitarian nature of the goods on each truck and notifying the Syrian authorities after each shipment. The United Nations provides 48-hour notice to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for all shipments. United Nations partners ensure that, once in the country, shipments arrive at the designated warehouses. Independent third-party companies contracted by the United Nations ensure independent verification of the assistance arriving at the warehouses and also monitor the distribution and/or service provision. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

Figure IV

Number of targeted beneficiaries by the United Nations and its partners by cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, December 2017

(Thousands)

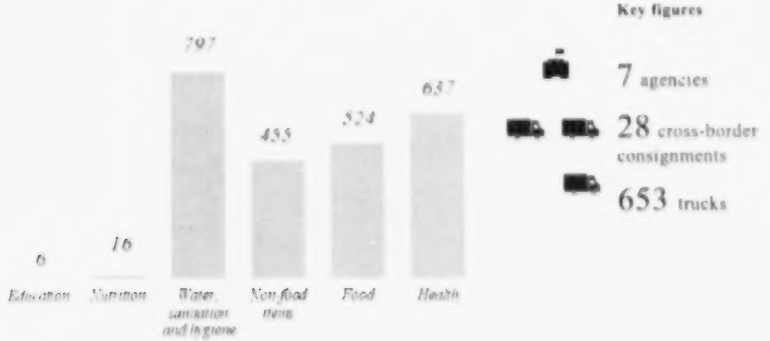


Table 5

Number of targeted beneficiaries through cross-border deliveries by sector and by district, December 2017

Governorate	District	Education	Food	Health	Non-food items	Nutrition	Water, sanitation and hygiene
Aleppo	Bab	–	–	–	11 000	–	5 500
Aleppo	I'zaz	–	100 160	36 965	69 332	2 625	1 000
Aleppo	Jarabulus	–	–	–	28 421	–	5 500
Aleppo	Jabal Sim'an	–	38 270	1 960	24 650	–	12 000
Dar'a	Sanamayn	–	–	–	–	–	38 000
Dar'a	Dar'a	2 400	118	63 132	22 325	1 560	440 168
Dar'a	Izra'	–	815	–	16 495	781	206 199
Hama	Suqaylibiyah	–	5 000	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Ma'arrah	–	65 875	3 528	20 425	–	–
Idlib	Ariha	–	22 500	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Harim	–	239 725	35 485	7 218	10 407	9 056
Idlib	Idlib	–	42 500	2 352	129 456	–	–
Idlib	Jisr al-Shughur	–	9 240	–	99 657	–	6 750
Qunaytirah	Fiq	–	–	52 400	–	–	6 000
Qunaytirah	Qunaytirah	3 600	385	442 125	26 560	780	67 400

34. Throughout December, the Russian Federation sent information bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, which outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian financing

35. As at 31 December, the humanitarian response plan for the Syrian Arab Republic was 51 per cent funded, with $1.7 billion of the requested $3.35 billion received under the plan.

Figure V
Humanitarian response plan funding, 30 December 2017

(Millions of United States dollars)

Visas and registrations

36. A total of 41 new United Nations visa requests were submitted to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in December. Of those, 7 were approved, 2 were denied and 32 remain pending. Of the 24 visa applications submitted in October and November, 22 were approved in December and 2 were denied. A total of 52 United Nations visa renewal requests were submitted in December, of which 34 were approved, 1 was denied and 17 remain pending. An additional 53 requests for visa renewals submitted in November were approved in December. For some United Nations entities in the Syrian Arab Republic, a significant number of staff are not in place or cannot be replaced owing to the non-issuance of visas for months, despite formal requests.

37. A total of 23 international non-governmental organizations are registered with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to operate in the country. Some 220 national non-governmental organizations are authorized by the Syrian Arab Republic to operate through 315 branches countrywide.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

38. Programmes of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are implemented in areas affected by frequent clashes among belligerents, air strikes, regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and asymmetrical attacks.

39. Since the start of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 22 staff members of the United Nations or agencies of the United Nations system, of whom 18 were UNRWA staff members, 66 were staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 8 were staff members and volunteers

of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Many staff members of international and national non-governmental organizations are also reported to have been killed.

40. A total of 27 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme and 26 UNRWA staff members) are being detained or are missing.

III. Observations

41. The extent to which the situation on the ground in the Syrian Arab Republic remains volatile is of great concern, particularly as civilians continue to bear the brunt of ongoing military activity, heavy fighting, air strikes and besiegement. While some progress was made in Astana in December, as the ceasefire guarantors — Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation and Turkey — agreed to establish a working group on detainees/abductees and issued a joint statement on humanitarian mine action, tangible results are needed to reduce the suffering of the Syrian people.

42. Given the sustained high level of need amid the considerable constraints on humanitarian access within the country, it is critical that the United Nations reach all in need through the most direct routes. As I have stated previously, all modalities of the delivery of assistance are essential to the efficient and effective provision of humanitarian assistance and to ensuring a needs-based response. In this regard, I welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 2393 (2017), in which the Council extended for another year the authorization of the use by United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners of routes across conflict lines and across borders to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches people in need throughout the Syrian Arab Republic by the most direct routes. Through the adoption of resolution 2393 (2017), the Council has placed the people and their humanitarian needs at the centre; the resolution will ease the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people and will save lives.

43. Cross-border deliveries are, however, only one of the methods of delivery used by the United Nations and its partners. While continued cross-border efforts are crucial, improvements are urgently required in cross-line access. Only two United Nations inter-agency cross-line convoys were deployed in December; no convoy reached besieged areas. Cross-line access to hard-to-reach and besieged areas is critical, including to besieged eastern Ghutah, where 94 per cent of the total besieged population currently resides.

44. I note the medical evacuations of 29 patients from eastern Ghutah, reportedly as part of an agreement that includes the release of prisoners by non-State armed opposition groups. Under international humanitarian law, parties to the conflict shall facilitate measures for the sick and wounded to be evacuated to a location where they can be cared for. International humanitarian law makes it clear that medical evacuations are an obligation based on medical need alone. An additional 600 people remain in need of urgent medical evacuation in eastern Ghutah; 18 have already died while waiting to be evacuated. I call on all Member States with influence over the parties to the conflict to do their utmost for the medical evacuations to take place before more people die. At the same time, medicine, food and other humanitarian assistance must be allowed into eastern Ghutah without delay to alleviate the situation for those who remain trapped inside the besieged enclave.

45. Accountability for serious violations is a requirement under international law and central to achieving sustainable peace. I reiterate my call for the situation in the

Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court. I also call upon all parties to the conflict, Member States, civil society and the United Nations system as a whole to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

46. The failure to make further progress at the eighth round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva was a missed opportunity. Ending the immense suffering of the Syrian people remains the impetus driving my Special Envoy to resume intra-Syrian talks in Vienna in January. Substantive progress at this ninth round of talks will be crucial in this regard. I welcome all the efforts made by Member States to end hostilities. I continue to support my Special Envoy and the United Nations-led Geneva process as the only process mandated by the Security Council to bring a conclusion to this war.

Annex

Incidents affecting civilians recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, December 2017*

Damascus and Rif Dimashq Governorates

- On 2 December, air strikes hit a residential area in opposition-controlled Irbin and reportedly killed six male civilians.
- On 3 December, air strikes hit a residential area in Irbin, allegedly killing three civilians, including two children, and injuring at least five other civilians, one of them a woman.
- On 3 December, six civilians, including a man and his son, were reportedly killed by an air strike that hit opposition-controlled western Hamuriyah. At around 11.50, an air strike hit a shopping area in Hamuriyah, while another strike damaged a nearby building, allegedly killing nine civilians, including three boys and a girl, and wounding a male civilian, who reportedly died the following day.
- On 4 December, several ground-based strikes hit a residential area in the Government-controlled Abbasiyin neighbourhood of Damascus and reportedly caused the deaths of two male civilians.
- On 6 December, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Irbin, damaging a residential building and reportedly killing a boy and a girl and injuring their mother.
- On 13 December, ground-based strikes hit a residential area of opposition-controlled Bayt Siwa and allegedly killed two civilians, including a boy, and injured an unknown number of other civilians.
- On 16 December, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in opposition-controlled Duma, reportedly killing three civilians, including two women and a child.
- On 19 December, ground-based strikes hit Al-Idshaaria Street in the residential area of Zablatani, in eastern Damascus, allegedly resulting in the death of three civilians, including a woman and a 14-year-old boy, and wounding six civilians, including two women and a 15-year-old boy.
- On 21 December, a farmer was reportedly shot and killed in Kafr Batna as he was working on his land in the vicinity of Mulayhah.

* In line with Security Council resolution 2258 (2015), the present description of developments on the ground and the incidents that occurred during the month that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has been able to corroborate, relates to compliance with Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Ceasefire of the International Syria Support Group. The reporting is not a comprehensive listing of all violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law that took place in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period.

Dar'a Governorate

- On 1 December, a car travelling on a road in the vicinity of opposition-controlled Ibta' hit an improvised explosive device, which reportedly killed a civilian woman and injured two other civilians - her brother and a child.
- On 7 December, the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army allegedly publicly executed two male civilians in Saham al-Jawlan and another male civilian in Tasil after the three had been "sentenced" by a "court" run by the group, for allegedly providing support to the Free Syrian Army.
- On 11 December, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in the vicinity of the Omari mosque in Dar'a al-Balad, reportedly killing a girl and injuring three male civilians.
- On 17 December, ground-based strikes hit a road in the vicinity of Kafr Shams, allegedly killing two civilians as their motorbike exploded after being hit by shrapnel.

Aleppo Governorate

- On 11 December, Turkish-backed forces of Operation Euphrates Shield reportedly publicly executed four alleged ISIL members at a square in the centre of Jarabulus city, in north-eastern Aleppo Governorate. The four members were accused of killing civilians in then-ISIL-controlled Jarabulus in 2014. Euphrates Shield forces had recaptured the city from ISIL in August 2016.
- On 12 December, air strikes hit the Levant Liberation Organization-controlled village of Ramla, in Khanasir District, southern Aleppo Governorate, and allegedly injured 11 civilians, 3 of whom sustained serious injuries. Those injured were reportedly internally displaced persons who were later transferred to a hospital in Idlib Governorate owing to the lack of medical facilities in southern Aleppo.
- On 17 December, ground-based strikes hit a playground at a secondary school in the government-controlled New Aleppo neighbourhood of Aleppo city, allegedly injuring one girl and two female teachers.

Idlib and Hama Governorates

- On 8 December, air strikes hit residential areas in Zurzur village, south-eastern Idlib Governorate, and reportedly killed seven civilians from the same family — three women and four children — and injured at least four others.
- On 17 December, several air strikes hit residential areas in a southern neighbourhood of Khan Shaykhun, as well as the centre of the city, where the main market was also hit. The air strikes on residential areas in the centre of Khan Shaykhun allegedly resulted in the killing of 10 civilians: 6 women, 3 girls and a boy. A mother and her three children were among the victims. Many of the victims showed signs of severe burns. The air strikes that hit the main market of Khan Shaykhun reportedly wounded five civilians, including two women and a boy.
- On 19 December, air strikes hit residential areas of Tah town, in southern Idlib Governorate, reportedly killing a girl.

- On 20 December, air strikes hit residential areas in the centre of Ma'arr Shurin town, in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, and allegedly killed 18 civilians, including 7 women and at least 5 children, many of them from the same family. One of the families had been displaced from northern Hama Governorate.

Homs Governorate

- On 5 December, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in a mini-bus exploded in Ahram Street in the government-controlled city of Homs, reportedly killing 10 civilians.
- On 19 December, ground-based strikes hit residential areas in the village of Si'in, east of opposition-controlled Talbisah, allegedly killing a boy.

Dayr al-Zawr Governorate

- On 1 December, the Baghuz, Buq'an and Jala' water crossings were hit by air strikes, which reportedly killed two male civilians at Baghuz and Buq'an and a girl at Jala'. The crossings remain under ISIL control.
- On 6 December, air strikes hit the town of Jurdi, in eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, and allegedly killed 17 civilians, including 2 women and 4 children. The town, which had previously been under ISIL control, was reportedly hit after the fighters had fled and SDF had captured the area.
- On 20 December, a car bomb detonated close to an SDF-controlled checkpoint at the Attal roundabout near Shahil city, in the eastern part of the governorate, and allegedly killed nine civilians, including four children.

Raqqah Governorate

- On 3 December, six male civilians checking their houses in Raqqah city were reportedly killed when unexploded ordnance in their homes detonated.
- On 7 December, seven civilians, including two boys, were allegedly killed by unexploded ordnance detonating in Raqqah city.
- On 17 December, a boy was allegedly killed when unexploded ordnance detonated near him as he was walking in Ghanim al-Ali village, in eastern Raqqah Governorate.

18-00847

United Nations S/2018/61

Security Council

Distr.: General
30 January 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 23 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 16–23 January 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

18-01420 (E) 020218 020218

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 23 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (16 January 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire: three in Aleppo Governorate and three in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported 10 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 7 in Damascus, 2 in Idlib and 1 in Aleppo.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,727 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,397.3 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 23 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 68,428 persons.

The safe passage of one United Nations humanitarian convoy was assured to Tall Shihab in Dar'a Governorate. Food and household items with a total cargo weight of 123 tons were delivered to the local population.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, a ceasefire agreement has been signed with Diyabiyah in Homs Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,329.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (17 January 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: four in Ladhiqiyah, one in Aleppo and one in Homs.

The Turkish representative office has reported five incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: two in Damascus, two in Idlib and one in Aleppo.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations: 2.4 tons of food was delivered to the local population of Mu'ardis in Hama Governorate, and 2.4 tons of food was delivered to the local population of Sulaybiyah in Aleppo Governorate.

In total, 1,729 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,402.1 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 27 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 68,455 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process remains unchanged at 2,329.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (18 January 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported four incidents of gunfire: two in Aleppo Governorate and two in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported nine incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: four in Idlib, three in Damascus and two in Dar'a.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation at the Russian Cultural Centre in Damascus city. Residents received food, children's clothes and school supplies with a total weight of 3.2 tons.

In total, 1,730 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,405.3 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 183 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 68,638 persons.

The safe passage of one United Nations humanitarian convoy was assured to Tall Shihab in Dar'a Governorate. Food and essential items with a total cargo weight of 110 tons were delivered to the local population.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, one ceasefire agreement has been signed with Tall al-Jijan in Aleppo Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,330.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (19 January 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported three incidents of gunfire in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported three incidents in the following Governorates: one in Damascus, one in Idlib and one in Ladhiqiyah.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Tarin, Homs Governorate. Food with a total cargo weight of 2.4 tons was delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,731 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,407.7 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 34 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 68,672 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, one ceasefire agreement has been signed with Duhayrij in Homs Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,331.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (20 January 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire: four in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and two in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported five incidents of gunfire: three in Idlib Governorate and one in Damascus Governorate.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Khan al-Sha'r, Aleppo Governorate: 2.5 tons of food was delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,732 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,410.1 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 80 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 68,752 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, one ceasefire agreement has been signed with Rasm al-Safa in Aleppo Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,332.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (21 January 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 10 incidents of gunfire: 7 in Aleppo Governorate and 3 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported two incidents of gunfire: one in Damascus Governorate and one in Dar'a Governorate.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out three humanitarian operations: 2 tons of food was delivered to the local population of Kawm al-Waysiyah in Qunaytirah Governorate; 2.8 tons of food and school supplies were delivered to the local population of Mazra'at Bayt Jinn in Rif Dimashq Governorate; and 2.7 tons of food and school supplies were delivered to the local population of Bayt Jinn in Rif Dimashq Governorate.

In total, 1,735 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,417.6 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 94 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 68,846 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process remains unchanged at 2,332.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (22 January 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported four incidents of gunfire: three in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and one in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported five incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: two in Damascus, two in Idlib and one in Dar'a.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Marrat, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate: 2.4 tons of food was delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,736 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,420 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 18 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 68,864 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, four ceasefire agreements have been signed: with Rujm Ayn al-Gharit in Aleppo Governorate; with Kawkab and Shullin in Hama Governorate; and with Amiriyah in Homs Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,336.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (23 January 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported three incidents of gunfire: two in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and one in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported three incidents of gunfire: two in Damascus Governorate and one in Dar'a Governorate.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation: 2.1 tons of food was delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,737 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,422 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 143 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 69,007 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process remains unchanged at 2,336.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/62

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 January 2018

Original: English

Identical letters dated 23 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I am writing to inform you of the preliminary details of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Humanitarian Relief Plan for Yemen for the year 2018, announced at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the "Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen" on 22 January 2018 and devised with the aim of meeting all the humanitarian needs of all Yemeni citizens and of easing access to commercial shipments and oil products in all parts of the country, including Sana'a and Hodeida. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia formulated this comprehensive humanitarian plan with a view to addressing the security threats posed by the Houthi militias — in particular by the ballistic missiles, arms and ammunition smuggled into the Houthi-controlled port of Hodeida by Iran — to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, regional States and to international maritime transport and commercial waterways. The plan represents a continuation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's support to the brotherly Yemeni people — which has surpassed $8 billion dollars since the conflict began in 2015 — and its main aims include:

(a) Delivering and installing the four mobile cranes for the delivery of foodstuffs by the World Food Programme in Hodeida port;

(b) Contributing $1.5 billion dollars to the 2018 United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen;

(c) Depositing $2 billion dollars in the Central Bank of Yemen;

(d) Providing oil derivatives as donations from member States of the "Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen";

(e) Reducing transport costs by spending $20 to $30 million dollars on updating the transportation infrastructure;

(f) Increasing the capacity of Yemeni ports to receive 500,000 metric tons per month in imports of oil derivatives, doubling the peak amount of oil derivatives shipped in 2017, including by spending $30 to $40 million dollars to increase the capabilities of the Aden, Mukalla and Mokha ports through the installation of four additional cranes (2 in Mokha, 1 in Aden and 1 in Mukalla) as well as other logistical projects in these ports to increase power generation and storage capacities;

(g) Utilizing the port of Jazan with a capacity of up to 73,000 metric tons per month, to receive commercial supplies and humanitarian goods owing to its close proximity to population centres in northern Yemen.

Please recycle

The "Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen" will establish an air-bridge between the member States of the "Coalition" to Ma'rib, with the capacity to deliver up to 6,000 metric tons of critical humanitarian and medical supplies per month in times of emergency.

The "Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen" will also establish 17 safe passage corridors from six hubs to facilitate the delivery and the distribution of aid throughout Yemen, as follows:

(i) Al Khadra corridor, to transport aid from Saudi Arabia to Sa'da, Al Hazm and Sana'a;

(ii) Al-Tuwal corridor, to transport aid to Hajjah, Omranand Sana'a;

(iii) Hodeida port, to transport aid to Hajjah, Omran and Sana'a;

(iv) Mokha port, to transport aid to Taiz and Hodeida;

(v) Aden port, to transport aid to Taiz, Ib, Dhamar and Sana'a;

(vi) Aden airport, to transport aid to Sana'a and Sa'da.

Should the Houthis refuse to accept the United Nations proposal regarding Hodeida, Hodeida will remain open for humanitarian and medical supplies as well as commercial food shipments. Fuel and other commercial shipments will be diverted to Aden, Mukallah, Mokha and Jazan to be delivered to Hodeida and the other regions through the aforementioned safe passage corridors.

The port of Saleef will be open for humanitarian and medical supplies as well as commercial food shipments.

Sana'a airport will remain open for humanitarian flights.

The Kingdom of Saudi looks forward to deepening its cooperation and collaboration with the United Nations to benefit the Yemeni people, who, through no fault of their own, have been made to bear the brunt of the destructive and divisive policies pursued by Iran and its proxies, and who are entirely reliant on the joint efforts of the region's countries and the United Nations to achieve the bright future that they deserve.

It would be appreciated if the present letter could be circulated to all members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2018/63

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 January 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 19 January 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), in which the Council requested me to establish an investigative team, headed by a special adviser, to support domestic efforts to hold Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) accountable, by collecting, preserving and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the terrorist group ISIL in Iraq.

I also have the honour to refer to my letters to the President of the Security Council of 20 November 2017 (S/2017/989), 14 December 2017 (S/2017/1072) and 21 December 2017 (S/2017/1122) and the letters dated 27 November 2017 (S/2017/990), 18 December 2017 (S/2017/1073) and 27 December 2017 (S/2017/1123) from the President of the Security Council addressed to me.

In his letter of 27 December 2017, the President of the Security Council informed me that the members of the Council had taken note of my request for an additional period of time, until 19 January 2018, for the submission of the terms of reference of the investigative team.

The Secretariat has continued to engage with the Government of Iraq to resolve the issue concerning the sharing of evidence by the investigative team for use in criminal proceedings in which capital punishment could be imposed or carried out. Notwithstanding the best efforts of the Secretariat, it has not been possible thus far to resolve that issue and, consequently, to finalize terms of reference acceptable to the Government of Iraq.

I therefore wish to request an extension of the time frame for the submission of the terms of reference until 9 February 2018, in order to continue the efforts to reach an agreement with the Government of Iraq. In the event that we are able to finalize terms of reference acceptable to the Government of Iraq before 9 February 2018, I will inform the Security Council accordingly.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

18-01137 (E) 250118

Please recycle

United Nations S/2018/64

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 January 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 24 January 2018 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that your letter dated 19 January 2018 (S/2018/63) concerning the submission of terms of reference pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 2379 (2017) has been brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

The members of the Security Council have taken note of the request contained in your letter that the time frame for the submission of the terms of reference be extended. They look forward to the submission of the terms of reference by 9 February 2018.

(*Signed*) Kairat **Umarov**
President of the Security Council

18-01139 (E) 250118

Please recycle

United Nations A/72/717–S/2018/65

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
25 January 2018

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda items 28 (a) and 68 (a)

Advancement of women: advancement of women

Promotion and protection of the rights of children: promotion and protection of the rights of children

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 22 December 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit to you herewith the report on the workshop entitled "Children and armed conflict and women and peace and security: leading to change — closing the implementation gap", convened by the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany on 20 and 21 April 2017 in Berlin (see annex). The report reflects the views of the workshop participants.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 28 (a) and 68 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Christoph **Heusgen**
Permanent Representative of the
Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations

18-01217 (E) 060218

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Annex to the letter dated 22 December 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report on the workshop entitled "Children and armed conflict and women and peace and security: leading to change — closing the implementation gap"

Executive summary

1. On 20 and 21 April 2017, the German Foreign Office convened a workshop in Berlin focusing on the subject "Children and armed conflict and Women and peace and security: leading to change — closing the implementation gap". The workshop brought together members of the Security Council, members of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict and the Group of Friends on Women and Peace and Security and staff of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, field practitioners and policy experts from the United Nations system and regional organizations (the African Union, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)).

2. The workshop built on previous initiatives and provided a platform for the discussion of recent developments relating to the normative framework of the children and armed conflict agenda and the women and peace and security agenda and their ability to inform and mutually reinforce each other. It explored how regional organizations implement the agendas at the policy and field levels and how cooperation between the two can be further strengthened. One thematic session covered blind spots in international responses to sexual violence. Another session focused on the emerging issue of conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys.

3. The proliferation and complexity of conflicts that are marked by diminishing respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and accompanied by a lack of resources and shrinking space for civil society were identified as factors that posed challenges to the effective implementation of both agendas.

4. New concerns have arisen with regard to both agendas. In addition, a set of emerging issues that remain outside the conceptual frameworks of both agendas demand responses.

Child protection

5. The need to include communities in responses to child protection issues was emphasized. The specific vulnerability of adolescent girls was highlighted, as was the need to integrate age- and gender-specific responses to children. The importance of taking vulnerability and gender-inclusivity into account was highlighted. There was a consensus that the protection of children affected by armed conflict is a shared responsibility, to be strengthened in deeper partnerships with local, subregional, regional and international actors and organizations.

6. A key outcome centred on the need for increased cooperation and information-sharing between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations to ensure that child protection is considered in planning, policy and training. As an example, working in tandem with international child protection actors and the Government of Afghanistan, the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan has set in motion a system for documenting grave violations against children and bringing them to the attention of the Government in an effort to promote accountability. A broader cross-regional approach is also needed to better protect people on the move, and the

discourse needs to move beyond gender binaries to include the vulnerabilities of all at-risk populations.

Women and peace and security

7. Despite efforts and good intent, the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda remains patchy across all its core principles. Chronic underfunding, continued resistance to bringing women to the negotiating table and the inability to systematically implement the agenda in the operational strategies of national and regional organizations were identified as key deterrents to effective implementation.

Emerging issues and blind spots

8. The workshop identified blind spots in current United Nations programmes. First, there is a need to respond to the stigma faced by children who are born as a result of sexual violence in a conflict and to the violence faced by the children of refugees fleeing a conflict. Second, the issue of sexual violence against men and boys remains unaddressed within the current United Nations framework. This encourages impunity for sexual violence against men and leads to a lack of access to remedies and reparations for male survivors. Sexual violence is often conflated with violence against women and girls. The risk that male victims will remain invisible and left out of responses is significant unless their rights and concerns are given a specific focus. It was considered important that different forms of sexual violence be addressed. National laws need to take into account the broader dimensions of sexual violence and criminalize such violence against all victims, regardless of their sex. There was consensus that greater monitoring and reporting and more data are needed to close the implementation gap and that it is necessary to include the issue of sexual violence against men and boys in the architecture of the United Nations. It should also be addressed by the Security Council or the Human Rights Council.

Key recommendations

9. On the basis of discussions held during the two days of the workshop, the following key recommendations were developed:

(a) Better coordination of the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda with regard to protection: (a) establish better synergies between the two agendas, for example, joint investigation plans and trend analysis; (b) ensure that the use of information on sexual violence is consistent between the reports on children and armed conflict and on women and peace and security; (c) improve strategic and day-to-day interaction between actors working on the women and peace and security agenda and those working on the children and armed conflict agenda at the policy level, but also in missions, when engaging with State and non-State actors, and improve training within United Nations missions on both agendas; (d) improve cooperation with local actors and with regional actors, namely, OSCE, the African Union, NATO and the European Union; and (e) improve responses to sexual exploitation, as that will have a direct impact on efforts to address sexual violence;

(b) Integrate components on women and peace and security and on children and armed conflict into peace processes: gender equality and children's rights and child protection provisions need to be core components of peace processes, and strong leadership is required. Women should be present at the negotiating table, and further strengthening of local women's leadership, such as through the African mediators network, should be supported. Women are actors in peace processes, not just victims in need of protection. Experts on the area of children and armed conflict should also be included in negotiation teams and their role expanded. Tools such as advisers on

women and peace and security and on children and armed conflict are required to more effectively operationalize mandates;

(c) Ensure justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law from all parties to conflict, including armed groups, as well as accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations and international staff;

(d) Raise the implementation of action plans on children and armed conflict in interactions with concerned Governments in political dialogues, demarches and cooperation programmes. Elements for implementation include the creation of child protection units in the military, the criminalization of the recruitment and use of children in national legislation and the establishment and implementation of age verification mechanisms in the military;

(e) Systematically integrate child protection into predeployment training and training missions as well as into military doctrine and operational planning and conduct;

(f) Ensure that regional and subregional organizations strengthen child protection through improved information-sharing and cooperation with existing United Nations mechanisms, and integrate child protection considerations into their policies, operational planning and personnel training;

(g) Ensure that budget cuts in peacekeeping and political operations do not have an impact on the effective fulfilment of mandates for the protection of children and women;

(h) The United Nations and regional organizations should integrate a gender perspective and child protection concerns into all phases and aspects of conflict prevention, early warning, analysis and planning, mediation, peacebuilding and the conduct and review of political and military operations and missions;

(i) The United Nations should increase the referencing of the women and peace and security agenda in the Security Council and integrate concerns relating to that agenda when considering crisis situations and emerging threats (include specific language related to women and peace and security issues in Security Council mandates, institutionalize briefings by civil society pursuant to Council resolution 2242 (2015) in New York and in field missions, mandate that all reports contain analysis regarding the differentiated impact of conflict on women, and incorporate women and peace and security elements into the terms of reference of commissions of inquiry and the designation criteria for sanctions regimes);

(j) Recognize and respond to blind spots such as children born as a result of rape, children of refugees, vulnerabilities due to sexual orientation and gender identity and, finally, the issue of sexual violence against men and boys;

(k) Put measures in place to serve children born as a result of rape by addressing their legal status and the social stigma against them;

(l) Consider creative ways to work with non-State actors on child protection and gender perspectives, including extremist groups by addressing legal obstacles and political and operational challenges;

(m) Examine ways to monitor and share information on and coordinate responses to the cross-border dimensions of trafficking in order to overcome the United Nations country-specific approach;

(n) Acknowledge and respond to the issue of sexual violence against boys and men in situations of armed conflict and displacement, through support for legislative, policy and programmatic change.

Detailed report on the individual sessions of the workshop

Old challenges — new opportunities? Updates on the status of the children and armed conflict agenda and the women and peace and security agenda

10. Discussions in the first workshop session centred on current concerns and initiatives relating to both the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda, highlighting commonalities, such as their shared focus on protection, but also core differences, such as the aim within the women and peace and security agenda of enhancing women's agency in political processes. It was noted that, despite the robust framework set up by the Security Council, both agendas suffer from an implementation gap. A two-step approach to address that gap in both agendas was discussed:

(a) Broaden the focus from a thematic approach to include a geographical approach in which implementation is assessed and planned for on the basis of specific country results, for example the progress of the children and armed conflict agenda in Colombia or the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Yemen;

(b) Security Council members must work on these issues in a united manner. Participants highlighted the important role of civil society and local communities in implementing the agendas with regard to policy development, information-sharing, monitoring and advocacy, and pointed to the requirement for inter-agency cooperation.

Children and armed conflict

11. Participants concurred that the complexity and multiplicity of conflicts and the reactive nature of the Security Council's response has posed serious challenges to the implementation of the two agendas. The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic remains a key concern. In addition, new global challenges such as trafficking and the efforts by Governments to counter violent extremism have serious implications for the protection of children in armed conflicts.

Five areas were identified with respect to improving the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda:

(a) *Action plan implementation*. Elements of action plan implementation need to be raised by Member States (and also by embassies in the respective countries), by the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, which functions as an important forum for ensuring joint advocacy, and by regional organizations in their interactions with concerned Governments in their cooperation programmes, political dialogues or other démarches. This includes, but is not limited to, the creation of child protection units in the military, the criminalization of the recruitment and use of children in national legislation and the establishment and implementation of age verification procedures in the military;

(b) *Monitoring and reporting mechanism*. The effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism established under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) should be upheld, in particular through the provision of sufficient human and financial resources to ensure the systematic gathering of accurate, timely and objective information on the six grave violations committed against children affected by armed conflict;

(c) *Peace processes*. Child protection provisions should be included in negotiations and in ceasefire and peace agreements. Experts on children and armed conflict should be included in negotiation teams and their role expanded;

(d) *Bilateral and regional military interventions*. Military deployments bring a wide range of child protection challenges to the fore. At the same time, they offer an opportunity for Member States and regional organizations to mainstream child protection into their military operations. Child protection should be systematically integrated into predeployment training (the Department of Peacekeeping Operations offers predeployment training to its troops; NATO provides online courses on children and armed conflict) and training missions led by Member States and regional organizations, as well as into military doctrine and operational planning and conduct;

(e) *Security Council mandates and reports*. Ensure that all Security Council mandates include specific language related to children and armed conflict issues and that reports contain analysis regarding the impact of conflict on children.

Women and peace and security

12. The involvement of women is known to have a discernible impact by lowering complaints of misconduct and the use of force and weapons. A statistic from 2016 from the Security Council showed that 88 per cent of Council reports contain some reference to women and peace and security and that there is a clear relationship between mandates, gender expertise and information and analysis. The sensitivity of the Council to women and peace and security has increased and, in specific countries, reference to the women and peace and security agenda has been made: in 2016, 56 per cent of crisis documents included a reference to women and peace and security, whereas in 2015 the figure was only 38 per cent.

13. It was stressed that women and peace and security concerns should be discussed in the consideration of crisis situations and emerging threats. The following recommendations were provided to increase the referencing of the women and peace and security agenda in the Security Council:

(a) Ensure that all Security Council mandates include specific language related to women and peace and security issues;

(b) Mandate that all reports contain analysis regarding the differentiated impact of conflict on women;

(c) Incorporate women and peace and security elements into the terms of reference of commissions of inquiry and the designation criteria for sanctions regimes;

(d) Institutionalize briefings by civil society pursuant to Council resolution 2242 (2015) in New York and in field missions;

(e) Ensure that all field missions fully incorporate women and peace and security components into their terms of reference;

(f) Call for justice and accountability for all perpetrators of grave human rights violations from all parties to a conflict and from armed groups, as well as accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations and international staff.

14. Participants drew attention to the issue of budgetary shortfalls in relation to women and peace and security: according to the figures presented, only 2 per cent of aid on peace and security is targeted at gender equality, and only a few of the 64 national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) have been allocated a budget.

Improving protection against sexual violence and addressing its impact

15. A presentation on Security Council resolution 2331 (2016), which prioritizes the fight against human trafficking for sexual exploitation, was the starting point for the second session, followed by the identification of trends and challenges regarding sexual violence in conflict, such as dealing with non-State actors, stigma and various groups of survivors.

16. Resolution 2331 (2016) responds to trafficking from the perspective of international criminal law and sexual violence from the perspective of humanitarian law. The resolution paves the way for more systematic monitoring and reporting, enhanced information-sharing and judicial cooperation.

17. It was noted that sexual violence and the trafficking and sale of women and girls were part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, including in situations such as those in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Resolution 2331 (2016) responded to that phenomenon and addressed the nexus between trafficking, sexual violence, terrorism and transnational organized crime, but the resolution still faces an implementation gap.

18. One challenge is how to deal with non-State actors. Among the parties listed in the Secretary-General's report of 2017 on conflict-related sexual violence, 11 of 46 parties are State actors; the rest are non-State actors. Given that commitments on addressing conflict-related sexual violence have been signed with many of the State actors, there is a need to focus more on engaging non-State actors and, in doing so, address the operational as well as political challenges that that entails, such as legitimacy.

19. Sexual violence against internally displaced persons and refugees is another challenge that needs a tailored response. The focus must be broadened in order to consider sexual violence not only in camp settings but at every stage of the displacement cycle: as a driver of displacement; during flight, when most incidents are reported; and in camps and urban settlements in which internally displaced persons and refugees seek refuge. It is, therefore, particularly important that all refugee-receiving countries adopt measures to mitigate the risk of sexual violence, to make services available to survivors and to provide them with the option of documenting their cases for future accountability processes. Furthermore, Member States are encouraged to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a form of persecution that may serve as grounds for asylum or refugee status.

20. Subsequent presentations flagged the absence of data on internally displaced persons as a factor that inhibits comprehensive responses, since vulnerabilities exist at every stage of the displacement process. The lack of safe routes for those seeking asylum was also identified as an important contributor to trafficking and sexual violence, as refugees are forced to use illegal pathways. Displacement causes changes in social behaviours, which give rise to tensions and sexual violence.

21. An area that needs further attention is the situation of children born as a result of rape. In situations such as that in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as in current settings such as Iraq, consideration needs to be given to clarifying the legal status of undocumented refugee children, including children conceived as a result of rape, and the right of mothers to confer their nationality upon their children in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This is necessary to prevent possible statelessness. Since stigmatization is transferred from women to children, responses need to include not only women survivors, but also their families and children.

22. The above-mentioned report on conflict-related sexual violence takes a new look at the issue of stigma. The report underpins the debate, but stigma should be regarded as a persistent long-term problem that must be addressed. Stigma kills. The manifestation of stigma can lead to honour crimes, suicides (e.g., in the Middle East and North Africa region), unsafe abortions, economic exclusion and indigence. Stigma is handled as an immediate protection issue rather than a long-term issue. The Security Council could put an increased focus on this issue and could encourage Member States to move the stigma from the victim to the perpetrator. These dimensions need to be considered in responding to conflict-related sexual violence through programmatic interventions.

23. The following recommendations to prevent sexual violence and improve victim support were provided from the perspective of international humanitarian law and human rights law: (a) strengthen respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law in order to prevent displacement; (b) improve access for and engagement by humanitarian actors with regard to armed groups in order to encourage them to accept protection; (c) facilitate substantive engagement with victims to understand their views and needs; (d) remind Governments of their obligation to investigate sexual violence allegations; and (e) apply a do-no-harm approach when working with survivors and mainstream sexual violence risk prevention throughout programme implementation.

24. With regard to reparations, it was noted that further doctrinal development is not necessary, but practical delivery is. The United Nations has provided robust principles for the delivery of reparations and remedies in its Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (2005), and the Secretary-General issued a guidance note specifically on delivering reparations for conflict-related sexual violence in 2014. The United Nations should work through entities such as the Land, Property and Reparations Division of the International Organization for Migration to deliver reparations to survivors. Donors should make reparations for victims a priority.

25. The discussion covered issues concerning the relevance of HIV to both female and male survivors and the duplication of trauma for sexual violence survivors who have had to live with HIV that was contracted through sexual violence. It was recognized that a broader cross-regional approach was needed to better protect people on the move. Finally, the discourse had to go beyond gender binaries in order to include the vulnerabilities of at-risk transgender populations. Another topic of discussion focused on accountability and justice as relevant tools for preventing sexual violence. However, there remain significant challenges in moving forward, owing primarily to the lack of capacity of expert groups to provide the right information to the sanctions committees. While a project has begun to profile perpetrators in order to obtain more information on the chain of command and territories of operation with regard to Security Council resolution 2331 (2016), that information can be linked to sanctions lists. The economic costs of sexual violence need to be highlighted to promote greater buy-in on the part of Governments. Overall, the information gap on sexual violence was discussed as an important barrier to the implementation of the protection agenda.

Mainstreaming the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda at the policy level of the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, NATO and OSCE: lessons from the policy and field levels

26. The third and fourth sessions tackled strategies and experiences in implementing the agendas at the policy and field levels of the United Nations and regional

organizations such as the African Union, the European Union, NATO and OSCE, and participants discussed ways to strengthen cooperation.

27. Numerous OSCE decisions deal with trafficking in human beings, since that issue concerns all OSCE participating States. Protecting women in armed conflict, including by adopting national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), remains a priority for OSCE participating States. One thematic focus is the role of women in (countering) violent extremism. Strengthening partnerships at the international level through cooperation with the United Nations and with regional organizations on the ground is integrated into OSCE working methods. Field missions are extremely useful in supporting the monitoring of ceasefire agreements. However, a need to increase the focus on child protection in OSCE working areas and improve cooperation with other organizations at the national and international levels was identified.

28. Over the past few years, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has strengthened the protection of children affected by armed conflict. In 2009, the Department issued a policy on the mainstreaming of the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict within United Nations peacekeeping operations. The policy provided guidance on how to ensure that child protection concerns were mainstreamed at the strategic and operational levels of the work of peacekeeping operations. In 2017, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations issued an updated policy jointly with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support. The new policy on child protection in United Nations peace operations builds on the lessons learned since the launch of the 2009 policy. It provides guidance on critical child protection concerns, including the detention of children by peacekeepers and the treatment of children captured during military operations by national armed forces. It also prohibits the military use of schools, the use of child labour, and the sexual exploitation and abuse of children by United Nations peace operations personnel, all of which undermine the ability of peacekeepers and the United Nations to credibly and effectively protect children in conflict situations.

29. NATO has created the position of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Women, Peace and Security and has developed policies and directives for both the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda. With the recognition that contemporary warfare creates significant risks for children, NATO, in 2016, adopted a policy framework that includes standard operating procedures focused on training and education. The framework outlines a system of close cooperation with the United Nations. Afghanistan remains a key focus for NATO in the coming years, as the agency has deployed its first child protection adviser to the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. For the Resolute Support Mission, the implementation of the NATO policy on children and armed conflict remains an ongoing priority. Progress has been demonstrated by the Government of Afghanistan in implementing the United Nations action plan and the related road map, through a presidential decree criminalizing underage recruitment by the Afghan National Security Forces, which entered into force in February 2015, and the endorsement of age assessment guidelines to prevent child recruitment. In partnership with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Resolute Support Mission is supporting the Ministry of Defence of Afghanistan in developing a child protection policy that will provide, inter alia, clear guidance on handling cases of child recruitment within the ranks of the Afghan National Army and on the treatment of children recovered from non-State armed groups. The policy will also provide clear guidance on the military use of schools and provide the Government with operational tools to assist its implementation of obligations from the signing of the Safe Schools Declaration. After productive consultations with the United Nations, standard

operating procedure 307 was adopted by NATO. The procedure mandates the Resolute Support Mission to establish its own information-sharing mechanism on children and armed conflict. The mechanism will collect information on the six grave violations against children in armed conflict, in a similar way to the monitoring and reporting mechanism mandated under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and implemented by the United Nations country team. Information collected on incidents relating to children and armed conflict that qualify as gross violations of human rights is transmitted to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence for prosecution through the Attorney General's Office and through military courts, respectively. Those existing processes provide an opportunity to combine a reporting and information-sharing mechanism on children and armed conflict with a mechanism that enhances accountability.

30. The women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda are being prioritized and, as a result, play a crucial role in the European Union, although there is room for improvement in their implementation. The European Union acknowledges the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda as two separate agendas that are interrelated in parts. Within the European Union, gender and human rights advisers are combined in posts, but there is increasing understanding that the two need to be bifurcated to improve implementation. While a clear recognition of children and armed conflict and gender/women and peace and security exists within the European Union and is backed by strong leadership commitment, that does not guarantee effective implementation. Effective structures, procedures and instruments need to be implemented, and it is essential to integrate a gender perspective, as well as child protection concerns, into all phases and aspects of organization, from conflict prevention, early warning, analysis and planning to mediation, peacebuilding and the conduct and review of operations and missions. Key challenges include ensuring that the content and substance of training are relevant and useful, mitigating the potential loss in institutional knowledge due to rapid staff turnover and the comprehensive implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, including issues concerning sexual exploitation and abuse.

31. The African Union has prioritized women and peace and security in a number of ways, including the adoption of several documents on women's rights since 2003 and the appointment of a special envoy for women and peace and security, whose mandate includes advocacy, bridging policy gaps, enhancing partnerships and building synergies within the African Union. As an example, the African Women Leaders Network focuses on transformative leadership and generates positive competition between countries. The African Union had also developed a strong framework for the protection of women and conducts campaigns against sexual violence in Nigeria and South Sudan. For the African Union, it is of crucial importance that women be more involved in peace processes, which can be accomplished by bringing together existing women's groups to express their voice and supporting strong women leaders. Weak support and funding of women's organizations remains a challenge for the African Union. Often, the ministries for women's affairs are the least funded. A participant noted that, while 19 African States have national action plans that include the role of women, none of them make any reference to the role of children.

32. Participants from NGOs presented and discussed their experiences of good practices but also of gaps and challenges in implementing the agendas in the field. The reintegration of girls formerly associated with armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was identified as a challenge, where assistance programmes do not adequately address community and family rejection and stigmatization. In Yemen, women still play a subordinate role in the peace and security process,

notwithstanding the fact that the country's current Constitution sets a 30 per cent quota for women's participation. Yemen does not have a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and laws in Yemen do not contain specific provisions to protect women from gender-based violence. It was also noted that the gender-based violence cluster is underfunded. Groups in Yemen recommend improvements in monitoring, judicial systems and access to information as steps towards increasing compliance with women and peace and security objectives.

33. During discussions, participants identified broader challenges to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda, in particular, the lack of resources and growing political resistance, diminishing respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and shrinking space for civil society.

Emerging topic: sexual and gender-based violence against boys and men in conflict

34. The introductory section of the session laid out how sexual and gender-based violence against boys and men is often a blind spot in international responses, owing to associated taboos. The scale of sexual violence against males in conflict remains unknown, since systematic or baseline data and trends in relation to locations, frequency and specific types of sexual violence against men and boys are not available. The dearth of systematic data and the absence of a coordinated response to sexual violence against males leads to impunity for such violence, a lack of access to remedies and reparations for male survivors, limited programmatic responses to male sexual violence survivors, and a lack of gender inclusivity in the global discourse on gender-based violence, resulting in little or no acknowledgement of male victimization, including on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

35. At the international level, the term "violence against women and girls" is well defined in United Nations resolutions, treaties, general comments and consensus documents. However, there has yet to be a United Nations human rights mechanism that explicitly condemns sexual violence against men and boys. Sexual violence responses also currently fail to address the needs of those who suffer violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

36. The data from a study on conflict-related sexual violence against males in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sri Lanka was presented. Issues common in both cases include a lack of documentation and reliable numbers; sexual violence against males in detention sites; a lack of effective protection for victims and witnesses; and a lack of dedicated experience and weak legal frameworks for responding to sexual violence against men.

37. One presentation stressed a link between sexual violence against men and boys and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. It was highlighted that sexual violence stems from abuse of power against vulnerable and defenceless populations, and addressing HIV/AIDS requires ending violence against all genders. The link between AIDS and sexual violence consists of four elements: physical, social, emotional and psychological damage. However, sexual violence against boys is still a blind spot. It is downplayed in modern HIV studies, overlooked in HIV funding proposals, omitted by the national strategic plans on HIV, excluded from service delivery and stigmatized by countries, since raped boys and men often do not talk about it. There is an assumption that males cannot be victims of sexual violence. Gender-based violence is currently defined as violence against women, which ignores male rape.

38. Health providers do not look for sexual trauma in males, as they are not trained to do so. It is simply not on their radar. Male victims often do not come forward,

owing to stigma and shame, among other things. Furthermore, laws are not inclusive. A more gender-sensitive approach is needed that works towards eliminating gender bias and providing treatment, community response and access to safe, non-traumatizing justice.

39. Five case studies, from Libya, the southern Sahara, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, Afghanistan and Greece, showed that sexual violence against men and boys was pervasive and was still a blind spot. While types of sexual and gender-based violence vary, they have a common root: the power differential between the perpetrator and the victim, irrespective of whether the victim is female or male. This involves rape as a weapon of war, rape as torture, sexual exploitation, the persecution of gay, transgender and intersex persons, sex trafficking, hazing in the military, sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, and harmful traditional practices. The preamble and article 3 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 provide for the protection of refugees without discrimination. That is particularly important today when young male refugees are endangered. For example, 97 per cent of unaccompanied and separate children arriving in Greece are males who often come from Pakistan and Afghanistan. These boys are vulnerable and at great risk of sexual violence.

40. The discussion brought to the fore increased attention on sexual violence against men and boys in situations of conflict, albeit with careful and strategic consideration. Some key steps include the sensitization of field missions to sexual violence against boys and men, bearing in mind that the gender-based violence sector is already the most chronically underfunded. It was also noted that the European Union has prioritized the issue of sexual violence against men and boys. There was consensus that greater monitoring and reporting and more data are needed to fill the implementation gap, and it is necessary to include the issue in the architecture of the United Nations, with the help of the Security Council, or in the Human Rights Council.